

First Corinthians

Bible Commentary 2021

by

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In Christ Jesus - Chapter 1

1:1-3

Several times in Paul's epistles he mentioned his fellow workers. He mentioned Sosthenes as a Christian brother who was with him. Perhaps it was Sosthenes who transcribed the letter for Paul.

Paul's role as an apostle was important to establish because people should know Paul was sent by God. Paul was not someone off the street but was a special messenger sent by God to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. This commission was not from man but through the will of God.

His letter was to the Corinthian Christians. These people were the church of God at Corinth. As Watchman Nee noted the church was always designated geographically rather than by doctrines of men. Today men divide over names and doctrines of men but the only division in the early church was geography.

Paul's greeting included a pronouncement of God's grace upon them from which they also received God's peace. This was a greeting which perhaps had its basis in what the church consisted of: Jews and Gentiles. Grace was a Greek word and shalom was distinctively Jewish. Both Jews and Gentiles together make up the church of Jesus Christ.

The Corinthian Christians were called saints. They did not need to do supernatural works or die as a martyr to become saints. As we see as we read this letter the Corinthians were not special Christians but rather had many problems Paul confronted. Nevertheless they were saints. Don't allow man-made religion take away who you are in Christ Jesus. If you believe the gospel you are a saint.

1:4-9

We have not gone far yet in this letter and already Paul mentioned some doctrine we need to keep in the front of our mind as we live for the Lord Jesus.

Paul said there was an attitude of "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ". Does this attitude seem to us today to be a quaint, old-fashioned attitude for a Christian to have? Do we feel superior in our knowledge of the bible, even smarter than Paul who thought Jesus could come back at any

moment? After all, it's been at least 2,000 years now and Jesus has not come back yet. Surely those early Christians were just uninformed and ignorant, right?

Or maybe not. Maybe they were a lot smarter and closer to the Lord than what we give them credit. I look at the Bible as truth written from an eternal perspective. I don't think Paul or Peter or any of the apostles misunderstood the prophecy that Jesus was coming back to the earth soon. I think they did right living with an urgency that the Lord Jesus could return at any time. Because that is exactly the impression the Lord gave them.

Perhaps as years wore on Peter wondered. We see in Peter's letter he made the comment "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day". (2 Peter 3:8). Some people get sidetracked with that statement, but I think what he meant was that God does not measure time the same way we measure time. Our lives are short indeed in the light of two thousand years.

The early Christians died a long time ago. But when the Lord Jesus returns and they are raised to receive resurrected bodies it won't seem long to them. See what I mean? Time is relative to where you are. When we look at the Bible from eternity two thousand years might be considered as 2 days or a short amount of time.

Christians should be careful not to have dismissive attitude toward the early church's eager looking for the return of Jesus Christ. We do well to imitate this attitude because whether he returns in our life or not it does not matter. When we are raised up it will be as if it happened while we were alive.

For the Christian to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord Jesus. There is no death if you are a Christian. You may leave the physical body but you never die. Death according to the Bible is separation from God. Life is to be present with the Lord Jesus. He is resurrection and life.

Paul told the Corinthians that God is faithful. We discover the Corinthians had many problems which Paul corrected. He wanted them to get their eyes on the Lord and not on themselves.

Our mistake when the Lord corrects us is to feel sorry for ourselves. That is the wrong response. Our response should be to say, "yes, Lord, I am wrong, and you are right." He is right. I am wrong. Simple. Be on the Lord's side even against yourself. Get your eyes off yourself and your pride and get your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is worthy of all our attention.

Notice Paul said these Corinthians were not lacking spiritual gifts. We find this out more as we go forward. They were not afraid of the supernatural and had not developed a theology that said God quit doing miracles after the Bible was complete. People who think like that are similar to the Pharisees who thought they contain God in a religious system.

Even with all their spiritual gifts and problems Paul encouraged them that it would be God who would carry them on and complete his work in them. He would confirm them to the end. All this depended on God and not on them. Their part was to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and keep believing it every day.

1:10-13

Satan is clever in dividing the church into factions which compete against each other. How does he do this? It is simple. All you need to do is get Christians to follow a charismatic leader. Get them to exalt a theologian. All that is needed to divide the church is for Christians to lift up men.

Why is this common? It is human nature to worship self. The outward manifestation of worshiping self is to magnify the names of men. This work of dividing the church is subtle because most of the names of men which we lift up were spiritual and intelligent men. When we follow men we immediately divide the church. When we put emphasis on systems of theology men create rather than on the gospel then we are deceived again.

This is an ancient device of the devil. He used it before the church was completely on its feet in the first century. Paul confronted this pride in the Corinthians. What pride we have to exalt men and become followers after names.

Paul's goal was to teach people in the church to unite instead of divide. Dividing is a natural result of following the names of men. Unity comes when people fix their mind on the gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ. This takes humility for everyone. Division is the result of pride. Unity is the result of humility.

I could say a lot more about "names". It is important we learn that it is basic to the Christian life that we deny our "name" which is the symbol for "self". Deny self! Take up your cross. Follow Jesus.

1:14-17

Why do men put emphasis on water baptism? Paul did not put emphasis on baptism. He insisted that Christ did not send him to baptize but to preach the gospel. Preach the gospel! Why is there such interest in baptism?

At one time I attended a certain church on a regular basis. The pastor approached my wife and I about putting our names on the church roster. He wanted us to "join" the church since we were already regular attenders. We went ahead and did as he asked. Later on I wondered what motivated the pastor to get us on the church roster. It dawned on me what might have been the motivation. The more names on the church roster the better the church looked to district leaders of that denomination. It was about building the local church through gathering men's names under the umbrella of a church. Give the church a name and bring in numbers of people.

This is how the world system was originated at Babel. They wanted to make a name and gather together under a name so they could be great and powerful. This is an underlying principle of the world system. Make a name. Exalt the name by bringing people underneath the name. The more numbers the more provision and protection.

Why do Pastors stress baptism? We see Paul did not emphasize baptism. Paul saw the danger in baptizing people. It was easy for people to follow a man who baptized them. This is how people are naturally. This human tendency to follow men was something Paul resisted. Why? Because it is the spirit which works in unbelievers. It is how the world system operates and organizes itself. The reason some pastors are interested in baptizing people is so the name of their church and their name become

more powerful. The more baptism numbers the more powerful they are or so they might think. It is a way of measuring or proving success through numbers. I know for a fact many churches record the numbers of baptisms they have. Why? Why are numbers recorded? It is connected to provision, prestige, protection. Exalt a name through multiplying numbers! Build a church through multiplication of numbers! Someone decided that the best way to track success is by how many names are on the church roll or by how many people are baptized.

This is not the true church. Men who lead like this are blind to what they are practicing. They are blind to the spirit controlling them. They do not see that they operate according to the principle the world system does. Or maybe they do realize it and think that is just how things should be. But it is not the way the Bible teaches the true church operates. This is not the way to build a church. How do we build the church? Preach the gospel!

1:18-25

Here we have a contrast made between man's ways and God's ways. God chose a method of salvation that to the unbeliever is foolishness. However, for those who believe it is the power of God for salvation.

Paul quoted from the Old Testament to prove that God chooses methods which humble men. God always uses methods which resist and oppose the pride of men. He did not choose a method that a wise or strong man would choose, but instead chose his only begotten Son to be crucified and die for our sins. He died on the cross, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

As people pursue the wisdom of the world they stray further from the Lord. Worldly wisdom blinds people to the gospel. They think people who believe the gospel are stupid but those who believe the gospel are saved.

Those whom God calls know that the gospel is the power of God and the wisdom of God. No matter how foolish the gospel may seem to unbelievers it is wiser than worldly wisdom. The gospel may appear to be weak but it is stronger than any philosophy or psychology or self-help program people come up with. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes. This gospel is for everyone, for Jew, for Gentile, for everyone who believes.

1:26-29

Why doesn't God call men who are wise, strong, or mighty? This is a good question to ask. Paul's list of foolish, weak, base, and despised people stands in stark contrast to the value system of the world. This demonstrates how completely opposite the kingdom of God and the world system are.

The world system looks for the mighty, noble, wise, and strong. It searches for those who exude self-confidence and pride. This is what the world loves. This is the choice the world makes. They boast of wisdom, strength, and might.

God has not called them to his kingdom. They are slaves of the world system and worshipers of self. Those who belong to God are who the world calls foolish, weak, base, and despised. I have to laugh at the insanity of people who do not believe in God. It is obvious to those who walk in the Holy Spirit how insane unbelievers are. They look at Christians as foolish, weak, base, and despised. But God

chose us as his own. He wrote his name on us. We belong to him. We will live forever with him. Our home is not this world but another kingdom which will last forever. Our boast is not in ourselves. We are nothing. Christ is everything! The Lord Jesus is everything. He is all I need.

1:30-31

This verse is filled with truth to set us free from self, sin, the world system, and from the devil.

Let's identify who this verse talks about. "But of him". Who is him? "But of him are ye". Who is ye? "...in Christ Jesus". The "him" is God the Father, or it could be God the Holy Spirit. "Ye" is the Corinthian Christians, and indirectly us as well. We are included in this "ye". God the Father put us in Christ Jesus! In Christ Jesus is the position of every born again Christian. We live in Christ Jesus. We do not live outside of Christ. We are in him.

What does it mean to be in Christ Jesus? It means when Jesus Christ died on the cross we died in him and with him. It means when Jesus was buried we were buried. It means when Jesus was raised from the dead we were raised from the dead. We are in Christ Jesus. We are, even now, raised up together with him and seated with the Lord in heavenly places. This is our position in Christ. People say this is positional truth but I say this is true truth. It is not temporary. It is eternal. Our place in Christ Jesus is more real than this temporary world system we are in now.

Who put us in Christ Jesus? We did not put ourselves in Christ Jesus. How could we? It would be impossible for us to place ourselves into Christ Jesus. From first to last this is God's work. It is not about what we can do or have done. No! It is all about what God did through Christ Jesus and how he put us in his Son Jesus Christ.

This goes beyond forgiveness of sins. That is a wonderful benefit from being in Christ. Our sins are washed away. However, forgiveness of sins is the beginning of what God planned for those who are in Christ Jesus. A few more things happened also. We are delivered from self, from sin and death, saved out of the world system, and have overcome the devil. That is a lot more than forgiveness of sins.

This is the gospel which you never hear anymore. I've listened intently week after week to hear if a Pastor would preach this gospel. If you feed on TV for spiritual food you won't hear the gospel. As a matter of fact, you'll hear something which replaces the true gospel with what I call "Christian witchcraft". I won't go into that because I want to get back to being in Christ Jesus.

I would like to recommend a few books for further study on this topic: The Normal Christian Life, by Watchman Nee; The Spiritual Man, by Watchman Nee; Victory Over Sin and Self, by David Wilkerson. These books helped me tremendously to have a better understanding of what it means to be in Christ Jesus.

The Mind Of Christ - Chapter 2

2:1-2

Paul emphasized the gospel. Why would people preach with excellency of speech and wisdom? One reason I can think of: pride. A man whose mind is controlled by the world system of position, prestige, and pride would try to preach with excellency of speech and wisdom.

Paul was not filled with pride. He was a man who had contact with his creator. He heard the voice of God speaking to him. He was no longer deceived by the illusion of the world system and self worship.

What is the testimony of God? God's testimony is that Jesus Christ is God's Son and that he was crucified on the cross for our sins. God's testimony is that Jesus Christ died on the cross, he was buried, and he rose from the dead on the third day. Those who deny this testimony call God a liar and will give account one day for that.

Paul did not preach a message of self-help or self-improvement. He did not preach a message of positive affirmations. He did not preach a message of climbing steps of a man-made religious system. He determined that he would know nothing except one thing: Christ and Him crucified.

This is the capstone of God three in one. It is the foundation and it is the capstone of who God is. God is three in one. The message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and him crucified is the revelation of who God is. It shows us that only God can take away sins, only God can heal us, only God can deliver us, only God can truly change a life. There is only one way to approach God and that is through his son Jesus Christ.

There is no message more important than the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Environmentalism, social justice, peace on earth, and everything else which man's imagination comes up with pales in significance next to this: Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross for our sins, he died, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

In the gospel every issue man struggles with is addressed. Every problem of mankind is answered in Christ and him crucified. There is no other answer for mankind except the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no religion, philosophy, or psychology which can compare to the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is all we need. When we turn away from our ideas and opinions and fix our eyes on the Savior then we will know the truth. The truth of the gospel will set us free when we behold the Lamb of God. He is worthy of all honor, glory, and praise.

2:3-5

Who was Paul afraid of? He said he was with this church "*in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling*". I don't think he was afraid of people in the church. Of all the problems Paul had I don't fear of man was one of them. This is the same man who stood before kings and testified of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't think Paul's fear came because he was afraid of the Corinthians.

Why was Paul afraid and trembling? I think Paul trembled because he knew the importance of communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was afraid he might say or do something which would

give Christians a wrong idea of what the gospel is about. Paul had a fear of God and a profound awareness that he would stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Another reason Paul trembled was because he knew what he preached would provide a foundation for their faith. Their faith would be built upon the message Paul preached to them.

More than anything he wanted to make sure their faith did not rest in the wisdom of man or in the strength of man. It is so important Christians learn from day one not to put any confidence in man or what men can do or say or preach. Men are by nature followers of other men because of pride and self worship. Therefore Paul wanted to make it clear that he was not who they should follow. Paul was not the leader. He was leading the way by pointing them to the only one they should follow and that is Jesus Christ.

This has been a growing realization for me. When I was young I was a follower of men and their ministries. After seeing first hand men I admired fail I realized I needed to put my focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. Not men, churches, or ministries.

We need to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and not follow men. Men are weak and fail every time. Paul knew this and trembled before God as he pointed the Corinthians to Jesus Christ. He wanted to make sure their faith did not rest in the wisdom, philosophy, psychology, systems, or religions of men. He wanted to make sure their faith was in the only one who could save them and that is Jesus Christ. There is only one who will never fail and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. May his kingdom come and may his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

2:6-8

Not all wisdom is God's wisdom. I had a friend who would quote popular religious psychology books that said all truth is God's truth. These religious psychology books said to use the wisdom of the secular world in ministry. No matter how logical that sounds not all truth is God's truth. Even the devil can use the Bible to lie. Not all wisdom that is in the world is God's wisdom.

Paul described something he called "hidden wisdom". It was a wisdom he spoke about with other believers who were established in their faith in Jesus. This wisdom was completely different from the wisdom which the world system has. The wisdom of the world comes to nothing. All the pomp, power, prestige, position, and pride of the world system will one day fail. The world system is like building castles in the sand.

However, there is real wisdom which God gives those who believe in his Son Jesus Christ. Christ himself is the wisdom of God. 1 Corinthians 1:30, "*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:*" Real wisdom and truth is not an idea or a philosophy but a person. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. All of God's wisdom is wrapped up in the Son of God Jesus Christ.

If the world knew who Jesus was they would never have crucified him. Instead they would have bowed their knee and confessed with their mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Don't be distracted by the knowledge of the world. We live in the world, we interface with the world to do our job, but don't be united with the spirit in the world. The corrupt wisdom of the world is deception and delusion. It leads men astray and separates them from their creator. That is what the world system is designed to do. It enables man to meet physical needs but it destroys the spirit inside a man. God's kingdom is the opposite. It gives life to man's spirit and also takes care of his material needs as a matter of course (Matthew 6:33). Be careful not to get your eyes off the author and the finisher of your faith. He is God's wisdom and he is all we need.

2:9-11

The Lord does not hide from those who believe in his son Jesus Christ. He reveals himself to us as much as we can take while living in these earthly bodies. The Lord reveals himself to those who put their trust in him.

No eye has seen nor ear heard nor has it entered the imagination of man what God has prepared for those who love him. This is an exhilarating thought! The Lord is preparing something for those who love him. However, in the next breath Paul said that God revealed these things to us by his Spirit. What things?

I think what Paul is saying here is that every Spirit filled believer knows deep inside that the Lord has a good plan for them. His plans are good and not evil and this gives us hope for the future. (Jeremiah 29:11). Through patience and comfort of the scripture we have hope for the future. (Romans 15:4). The Lord goes before us just like he told his disciples. He went away in order to prepare a place for us and he will come again to receive us to himself that where he is we may be also. This knowledge is in the heart of every born again Spirit filled believer. We know this because God revealed it to us.

We are not afraid of the future. No matter what happens on earth our future is secure in Christ. We are not fearful of what men do on earth because our life is hid with Christ in God. The Lord is in complete control of every detail of our lives. We can trust in him and not be afraid. (Psalm 56:3).

The Holy Spirit revealed to us the good plan God has for us. Rejoice in the Lord. All the hardship is temporary and will give way to God's kingdom.

John 16:13, *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."*

2:12-13

Everything we know about God was received as a gift from God. We couldn't know anything if God did not show us. This should humble us and cause us to realize that it is not the smart man or the strong man or the clever man who is commended in the kingdom of God. Instead, it is the man the Lord chooses to reveal himself to. We have received! We did not earn anything. We did not work for it. We don't deserve it. We have received from God.

We could know nothing about God unless we received the Spirit of God. No one can really understand the Bible unless the Holy Spirit lives inside him. We can only know God if the Holy Spirit lives inside of us. The Holy Spirit only lives inside the man who believes the gospel and confesses that Jesus Christ

is Lord. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. If a man does not confess this then the Holy Spirit does not live in him. If the Holy Spirit does not live in him he cannot know God or understand God. The Bible is a closed book to anyone who does not have the Holy Spirit living inside.

The Holy Spirit shows us things which God gave us. The Lord gave us many spiritual things which we can rely on every day. We received forgiveness of sins, deliverance from self, salvation from sin, deliverance from the world system and the devil. These are only a few of the many things the Lord gave us.

What does it mean to compare spiritual things with spiritual? One part is to realize that the Bible interprets the Bible. Many times the meaning of a verse can only be discerned within the context of the chapter or book. A book in the bible can only be truly understood in the context of the entire Bible. It is important to interpret scripture with scripture and not interpret scripture with secular humanistic ideas. To understand scripture we need to develop a biblical framework for thinking. This comes by applying God's word to life. It comes through obedience and doing what we know in the Bible. More understanding comes as we put into practice what we learn.

2:14-15

Paul made a distinction between the natural and spiritual man. It helps our Christian walk to understand the difference between the natural and spiritual man. Watchman Nee wrote an in-depth book on this entitled "The Spiritual Man" which I recommend to people who want to understand what it means to be a spiritual Christian.

A Christian can believe the gospel but still continue to live in ignorance and unbelief. Some people only know enough about the Lord Jesus to know their sins are forgiven. This is the beginning and foundation. There is more that the Lord accomplished for us.

The natural man was described as the "old man", "carnal man", or the "flesh". Read Ephesians 4:22-24. Paul described the old man and the new man. The old man is the carnal man who walks in the flesh and unbelief. The new man is the one who is in Christ by faith and walks in the Spirit.

There is a distinction between unbelievers and Christians. There is also a distinction between Christians who live by the old nature and those who live by the new nature. The Christian is born again. We are taught in scripture to live in accordance with the new nature. We do this by faith in the gospel. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. This is a historical fact which took place in time and history. It is a spiritual fact which we can enter by faith and be united with the Lord Jesus. God himself placed us in Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:30)

The natural man cannot know these things. He cannot understand them because he will not stand under them. He insists on creating his own righteousness, his own world view, his own opinions. He takes whatever man-made religions there are and incorporates them into his unbelieving mind.

Christians do this also. Instead of continuing in God's word they adopt psychology, philosophy, and opinions of the world system. As a result they have minimal victory over sin. This is the brother of the flesh. There is also a brother of the Spirit.

The brother of the Spirit is an overcomer. He walks in the deliverance Christ accomplished. He walks in victory over self, sin, the world, and the devil. He does this by denying self and taking up his cross and following Jesus.

To walk the way Jesus did is to do everything for the glory of God. It means to live for the name of the Father and not for your own name. You deny your name, your self-life, and you live for the name of the Father just like Jesus. Jesus said everything he said and did was what he heard and saw from his Father.

This is what it means to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus. You no longer live for self. Jesus never lived for himself. He lived completely for his heavenly Father. Everything Jesus did was in obedience to his Father in heaven.

God the Father placed us in Christ. Therefore since we are in Christ we are a new creation. The old life is gone. The new life has come. Now live in the Spirit, believe the gospel every day, and keep your heart fixed on the Lord Jesus.

2:16

Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit lives in us we have the mind of Christ. If we wait on the Lord and listen to him he speaks to us. He instructs and teaches us. There are many promises in scripture which show us that the Holy Spirit teaches us and God leads and guides us.

We have the mind of Christ. This has helped me many times to discern between the voice of the enemy, my own mind, and the voice of God. The Holy Spirit lives in me. I have the mind of Christ.

If I have thoughts which contradict the Bible then those thoughts are not from me or the Lord. Those are thoughts which the enemy tries to put in my head. This is the first step in recognizing the difference between the mind of Christ and the enemy. Start with the promise that you have the mind of Christ.

We must have confidence that the Lord lives in us and we are in the truth. If we do not believe we have the mind of Christ we will be confused by the voices of the enemy. We need to be confident God's truth is absolute and we do not need to submit to public opinion. The opinions of culture change over time. I have seen this in my life. I have seen the winds of public opinion change over time. People are easily deceived by what they see on TV, hear on the radio, or read on the Internet.

But we have the mind of Christ. The Lord does not change. The truth does not change. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We must stubbornly hold to the truth which never changes. The world and unbelievers malign, criticize, and mock us for holding onto the Bible. It does not matter. We have the mind of Christ. Don't let go of it! Hold fast! Read 2 Timothy 1:13-14.

The Temple of God - Chapter 3

3:1-2

Paul described the Corinthians as "babes in Christ". They fed on milk and not solid food. Babies are unable to process meat but only drink milk. Paul said he spoke to them in baby terms.

Comparing what Paul taught to what churches today teach it seems we are still on milk. Churches call themselves by denominational names and follow men's names. They follow men's systematic theology of the Bible. This is how babes in Christ operate. They follow men.

Preaching holiness is not meat. People may assume meat is preaching against sin and exalting holiness. Those are good messages but they are not meat. The meat is Christ himself. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the meat of God's word. When people deny their name and to take the name of Christ then they have learned to eat meat.

Knowing our sins are forgiven is good but it is milk. We need to learn to live in consistent victory over sin. Milk is only laws of God and what we should or should not do. Knowing rules and the law is milk.

The meat is knowing Christ. To be healthy we learn that Jesus Christ is our living bread and our living water. We don't focus on doctrines about Christ but instead fix our heart on Christ. He is the author and the finisher of our faith. We don't want the crumbs from the table of humanistic psychology and we also do not want the crumbs from theologian's systems of religion. Instead, we want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings. We want to commune with Christ himself. This is not intellectualism. This is spiritual experience with our creator and our redeemer. This is hearing the voice of God speaking to us so clearly that we can quote the exact words he said to us.

I've in the past exhausted myself studying the doctrines and systematic theology of men. I was earnest to find a framework to pin my thoughts on so I could explain the Bible to anyone. I wanted to have an answer for any question I might be asked by an unbeliever. That was good but there is only one answer that can help: Jesus died for your sins on a cross, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. This is the gospel. This is the power of God for salvation for every man who believes. Nothing else can save, forgive, and deliver us from self, sin, the world, and the devil.

When we talk about babes in Christ we may not be talking about someone only saved for a short time. There are people who were Christians most of their life but still need milk. I have known new Christians who already grasped the meat of the gospel and fed their spirit on the Lord Jesus Christ. Maturity does not depend on time; it depends on how much a man is willing to humble himself and receive revelation from the Holy Spirit.

3:3-7

We have a descriptive list which defines what "carnal" means. This list includes envy, strife, and division. These characteristics manifest within the context of believers who boast of what Bible teacher they follow. Underlying this is man's natural inclination to exalt his name or follow the name of another man. Why do men exalt the names of men? To understand that we must go back to Babel. This is the heart and principle of the world system and man's independence from God.

What happens when men become independent from God? The result is that men provide for themselves, protect themselves, and find something besides God to worship.

Keep this in mind. The purpose of making a name is to create provision, protection, and purpose for men's lives. The Bible exposes this in the account of Babel. After men create a name they give power to the name by bringing numbers under the name. Create a name. Bring numbers under the name. This is the basic structure of every country, nation, corporation, and most churches. It is the spirit of the world system to exalt a name and multiply numbers. When you see this it will make the hair stand up on the back of your neck when you go back and read the encounter between Jesus and the man possessed by "Legion".

Why do men make a name? Why do men follow the name of another man? It is a result of man's natural sinful nature of rebellion against the heavenly Father, and it is because man, through unbelief, devises a system independent from God to provide for himself, protect himself, and worship self. Self-worship is the religion of unbelievers.

This is why men envy and strive against one another and divide. They multiply power through submission to a name. They also divide when individuals decide they want that power themselves. This has been going on since Cain and Abel. This is basic human nature. It is all right there in the Bible if God opens a man's eyes to see it.

Paul denied himself. He described himself as someone who was planting seeds. He described Apollos as someone who watered the seeds. However, it does not matter if we plant seeds or water seeds if God did not make the seeds grow.

See how Paul pointed back to God? This is what the Holy Spirit is trying to do with us. He is trying to get our eyes off men, off ourselves, and get our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the name of the Lord Jesus that is written on us. God wrote his name on us. We no longer belong to ourselves, but he has purchased us with his own blood. We were brought back to God through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Christian cannot follow self or other men and still follow God. We must seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. It is God himself who is our provision, our protection, and our portion. Have faith in God. Worship God. Do not follow self and the religion of self-worship. Repent and turn away from sin, self, the world system, and the devil. Turn to the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart.

3:8-11

The Lord is exclusive. There is no other foundation. What does it mean that there is no other foundation?

Paul used word pictures to describe what the Christian does and what God does. He compared the Christian worker to someone who plants seeds or waters seeds. He changed his word picture to calling a Christian worker a carpenter. He compared the Christian to a builder. He described the church as God's garden and he also compared the church to God's house. Paul was a carpenter working to help

build God's house. He was not just any carpenter in this project. He was one of the first builders on the scene and was involved in pouring the concrete for the foundation of the house.

The church is a house of faith. It is invisible but nonetheless real. Paul said in this house there was only one foundation and this was the Lord Jesus Christ. To build within the church we must build on the solid rock of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus used this same word picture. Read Luke 6:48-49.

The Lord Jesus is the foundation. Jesus said that obedience to his word was the same as building your life on the solid rock which will endure when storms of life hit you. I have found from personal experience that what Paul and the Lord Jesus taught is absolutely true. The Lord Jesus is a solid rock foundation for life. When we build our lives on this solid rock we are not moved when tribulation and trials come. Instead, storms of life only cause us to cling even tighter to this solid rock.

God is a rewarder. Scripture teaches that the Lord is a rewarder of those who believe in him and those who seek him. Read Hebrews 11:6.

The Lord sees us. He hears us. He takes detailed notes on how we believe in him, trust in him, and seek him. He promises he will reward those who seek after him. Read Matthew 6:33 and 1 Corinthians 15:58. Don't give up. Don't be discouraged. Keep putting one foot in front of the other. The Lord will make a way.

3:12-15

Paul continued with the word picture of building a house upon a foundation. This spiritual house is built on the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the cornerstone of the building. What kind of materials were used in constructing this spiritual house?

Do we use valuable materials? Do we use worthless materials? Biblically what has value is what is eternal. What has no value is what is temporary and passing away. What has value in building the spiritual house of the Lord's church? Only God's word lasts forever. Only obedience to God's word, and specifically the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, truly matters. Everything else is peripheral to the central issue of God's word and our obedience to God's word.

Read these verses carefully. We often get confused because we know our salvation is not accomplished through our own good works. However, these verses demonstrate a judgment of the believer's works. The only conclusion we can come to is that this judgment of works has nothing to do with our security in Christ. We are saved no matter what. Salvation is God's work. However, the reward God gives to the believer is related to how the believer lived his life. Our eternal reward and position in God's kingdom is related to our personal obedience. This is tied in with what the Lord Jesus said about building our lives upon the rock. If we apply the word of God to our lives and walk in obedience then we are building a life ("our house") upon a foundation which will stand under the fire of God's inspection.

Did we obey God's word? We can ask the Holy Spirit to help us walk in obedience to what we read in the Bible.

Our lives, whether lived in agreement with God or in disagreement, will be tried by the fire of God's judgment. This judgment will come in the future at a specific point in time Paul called "the day". He

said "the day shall declare it". There is a day God has appointed in which men's works will be revealed by the fire of God.

When we read this we should not have a dread like the world. Instead, as Christians, we are secure in God's perfect love for us. This fear should not be a tormenting fear like what drives unbelievers. Instead, the fear of God purifies us. It removes everything which is not essential for our future life in eternity. God is preparing us for something beyond our current comprehension. Fear God and let him do the work of sanctification in us.

God's work in us is wrapped up in the finished work of Christ. Our justification, sanctification, and glorification are accomplished by our union with the Lord Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection. In order to see this we have to look at it from the eternal perspective instead of thinking in chronological time sequence.

The takeaway is that Christians will pass through a fire of God's judgment. This judgment is not about going to heaven or going to hell. It has nothing to do with salvation. Paul tacks on the end of these verses that "*he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*". The Holy Spirit wants every Christian to take this judgment serious. We need to live right now in view of the judgment seat of Christ. We need to fear God and walk in obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

All of this is by faith. All of these works spring from the fountain of faith in the Lord Jesus. It is when a man neglects the gospel that the good works dry up. Jesus said if we do not abide in him we can do nothing. We will not bear the fruit of good works if we do not continue to abide in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to remember every day: Christ died for my sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. God the Father placed me in Christ and united me together with him. I am crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me.

Walk in the truth. Remember the truth. Don't be moved away from the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we stay in the word and stay in prayer then our lives will bear the fruit of God's kingdom. By God's grace we will one day hear the Lord say to us: "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

3:16-17

Temples are mentioned in the Bible. Before Israel had a temple they had a tent which they carried on their shoulders through the wilderness and in the promised land. When David became king he wanted to build a structure for God's tabernacle. He wanted to make a permanent home for the ark of the covenant. God did not allow David to do this but he did allow David's son Solomon to build a temple with the materials and resources which David stored up. This temple stood for a long time until it was destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. Eventually Israel returned to Jerusalem after 70 years of exile and rebuilt the temple again during the time of Nehemiah and Ezra.

The temple that was in existence during the time of Jesus was a structure which was mostly restored and built by the Gentile king Herod.

Until the time Jesus arrived temples were always outward structures made of stone and wood and precious metals.

However, things changed when the Lord Jesus appeared. Jesus made the statement that the temple would be destroyed and he would rebuild it in three days. The temple which Jesus spoke of was not the physical structure that King Herod built but rather his own body. Jesus changed the definition of what "temple" meant to refer to his own body instead of an outward physical building.

This changed everything. From this point when we talk about a temple in the New Testament it is talking about the physical body of the Christian. The body of each individual Christian is now the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Christians collectively as the church are the temple of God. We should no longer think of man-made buildings as a temple of God. The temple of God in the New Testament is believers as individuals and as a group. The temple of God, the church, is people, and not man-made buildings.

After we have this fixed in our mind let's read these scriptures again. We are the temple of God. The Holy Spirit lives in each Christian. He abides in each individual believer and also all Christians collected together as the church. We are the temple of God. Right after Paul made this statement he issued a strong warning. He said that anyone who destroyed God's temple that God would in turn destroy him. What did that mean?

I'm sure there are a lot of applications which can be made from these verses. People use these verses to teach Christians to stay away from smoking, drinking and overeating. But is that what Paul was talking about? What is the context of what Paul was saying?

We just finished reading the previous verses where Paul compared the church to being God's garden and also a house built upon a foundation. He said that Jesus Christ is the foundation of the house. He warned us that we will give an account to God on judgment day for how we built our lives, and also the church, on this foundation. We need to be careful with what materials we use in building this temple.

I think the primary thrust of what Paul said was that we should be careful about what we teach, preach, and disseminate as truth to other Christians in the church. It is easy to get side tracked into false doctrine or if not in outright false doctrine it is easy to get distracted by minor points and neglect the weightier matters of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul said we can be guilty of destroying God's temple in our service. That is pretty heavy to think about. Paul said if anyone destroyed God's temple that God himself would destroy him. Anyone who participates in ministry within the church should take this to heart.

This does not only apply to those who work full time in ministry because from a biblical point of view every single Christian is in ministry. Every Christian is responsible for using their God-given gifts and talents for the edification, comfort, and exhortation of brothers and sisters in Christ.

We need to be careful that what we say and do is for the purpose of building the church and not tearing it down. If anyone tears down God's people then God himself will intervene. You do not want to be found hurting God's people in any fashion.

This is why we need to humble ourselves and be wise in the way we interact with people. We need to take our words, attitude, and actions serious and not be careless. Our goal is to build Christians up and not tear them down.

We can tear people down with a prideful attitude. We can hurt people indirectly by having a worldly attitude of position, prestige, and pride. When we act like this and live like this we are not helping the body of Christ but we are hurting people. God cannot use anyone who is controlled by a worldly attitude but he will instead oppose you. God will bring discipline and correction to bear on anyone who walks in pride and disobedience.

When Paul said "God will destroy" he was not really talking about correction, though. He said God will put an end to anyone who hurts his people. Remember Ananias and Sapphira. Remember Achan.

3:18-23

We deceive ourselves because we think like the world around us. Being wise according to a worldly framework of logic makes men foolish. Why? Because he spends his life on what is temporary and fading away. He tries to satisfy the hunger in his soul by eating and drinking what does not satisfy. This world system does not fill the soul. The world system can only temporarily provide for what is external. This wisdom of putting self first is what the world system teaches us. However, this wisdom of the world is foolishness with God.

The Lord Jesus taught us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these other needs would be met by God. God takes care of small details in creation such as grass of the field and birds of the air. Of how much more value are we than grass and birds?

Worldly thinking is vain because it is based on illusions, deceptions, and a mirage. Ultimately all man's building is swept away by time. The universe is disintegrating and so will all of man's efforts at satisfying his desire for provision, protection, and self-worship.

Men who follow the attitude of the world boast in men. They exalt the names of men. They follow after the personalities of men. They would rather believe a philosophical system which men created rather than the gospel truth in the Bible.

Christians should not boast in men. This is what the world does. God gave men like Paul and Apollos so we could have our attention pointed to the only one who can satisfy our soul. His name is Jesus. He died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. He will return to this earth one day. He will establish his kingdom which will last forever.

Faithful to God - Chapter 4

4:1-2

It is required of those who have the responsibility of stewardship to be faithful. I learned this is what God expects from me. He wants me to be faithful. He does not expect me to save the world. He doesn't expect me to change lives. He wants me to be faithful.

Every Christian is a minister of Christ. We are called by the Lord to be faithful with whatever gift or talent we have. We are responsible for doing our part.

My heart's desire is to be faithful in what God gives me. Each day I want my goal to be faithful. I want to hear the words, "Well done good and faithful servant." That is my life's goal.

Faithfulness is not something we are born with. Men are born selfish and unfaithful. We are born thinking only of our needs. Our goal when we met the Lord was for our self. That was all we knew.

As a Christian I am no longer serving myself. God has called me to serve him and this is the best life anyone can have on earth. There is no better life than as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Read Matthew 25:21.

4:3-5

Paul stood before judges and kings and used it as an opportunity to preach the gospel. He shared his testimony of how the Lord Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. I agree with Paul that it was a small thing to him if people judged him. For Paul it was another opportunity to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this context the Corinthians compared Paul with Apollos. By necessity when people compare others they will judge people. The Lord Jesus warned us about judging people like this. With the measure we use on others it will be measured to us. We always lose when we judge people.

Paul encouraged them not to judge him or Apollos. It was not because he cared personally but because it was not good for the Corinthians to engage in this. Instead, he encouraged them to wait for the return of the Lord to judge the secrets of men's hearts. On that day believers will receive each one their own reward and praise from God. Until then we don't have enough information to be able to formulate a correct judgment about anyone.

How many times are the actions of others misinterpreted? All the time! Humans are not good judges, because we exaggerate or minimize what others do. We acquit murderers and turn around and penalize people who exercise their conscience.

Let's determine to leave all judging to the Lord. Let us judge nothing before the time.

4:6-8

What did Paul mean '*ye have reigned as kings*'? Paul was describing a position of authority. He was saying Christians have a position of authority. Because the Corinthians boasted of the names of men Paul knew they didn't get it. They did not understand who they were in Christ. Their thinking was still formed around the framework of the world system. The world system is based on the names of men.

God's kingdom is based on the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. God revealed his name to Moses: 'I Am That I Am'. He is the great I Am. There is none like him.

Men are deceived by the illusion of making a name and multiplying numbers under a name. They believe this method is their provision, protection, and purpose. It may provide for temporary things but

at a terrible price. The price is the soul of everyone who sells themselves to the world system. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? Everyone who buys into the world system will lose his soul.

Paul taught the Corinthians that he and Apollos were gifts which God gave them for the purpose of edification, exhortation, and comfort. These men were not to be turned into idols. If we become followers after the names of men then we no longer follow the Lord Jesus. We must learn to deny self, take up our cross, and follow Jesus.

Following Jesus means we live as he did. He only said and did what he heard from his Father and what he saw his Father doing. We can know what the heavenly Father says and what he does by reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating upon God's word. Also we must get shut into our prayer closet with the Lord. We must commune with the Lord. We must eat the bread of life and drink the living waters. Christ must be our life. Abide in him, let his words abide in you. Stand every day in the finished, completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We do have a position of authority. Our authority right now is to lay down our lives. Our authority right now is to serve and walk in humility. Our authority right now is to lose our life for the sake of Jesus and the gospel. Our authority is to present ourselves to God every day to be a living sacrifice. If we are faithful now then in the kingdom we will reign with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do not be deceived by men who walk in pride, prestige, and position. Do not be deceived by psychology, philosophy, and man-made religions. Stay in the word and stay in prayer. Stay with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

4:9-14

Paul's idea of greatness was much different than the Corinthians. Why did Paul describe all the problems, challenges, and troubles he endured? We should put his biographical entry in context. The underlying problem he spoke to with the Corinthians was their tendency to exalt men. How does the world exalt men? How are men promoted? Men are exalted by financial success and by avoiding suffering. The world praises men who do well for themselves. However, the apostolic resume Paul gave does not line up with the world's idea of greatness. Why did Paul tell the Corinthians this?

He described his life because he was trying to shatter their delusion about what makes men great. These Corinthians were enamored with men's names. They desired to be followers of great men. So Paul told them apostles suffer. They are weak. They are despised. They go around hungry and thirsty and naked. They are reviled, persecuted, and suffer. They are defamed and made the filth of the world. Paul said apostles are treated as the off scouring of the world. Why did Paul tell them this? What were apostles? They were men God chose to carry the message but God has no interest in exalting men. This work was completely divorced from pride, prestige, and position. In God's kingdom there is only one name which is exalted and this is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other name.

When he said he was weak but they were strong he was trying to help them understand they had a different value system than what a Christian should have. He said he was weak and they were strong. This must have been holy sarcasm. Paul was teaching them this value system of exalting men is the

complete opposite of the kingdom of God. In God's kingdom men are not lifted up. Only the Lord Jesus is lifted up.

He completed this section by saying he did not want them to be ashamed. He was not trying to shame them. Instead, he was trying to warn them that their way of thinking was not according to truth and was not a Christian framework for thinking.

4:15-21

When we get to these verses if we are not careful we might think Paul was contradicting himself. He just finished saying not to lift up the names of men such as Apollos and Paul. Then he turned around and told the Corinthians to follow him?

Paul was not promoting himself. He was not telling them to follow him personally. He was not telling them to submit to his (Paul's) name. Instead, he just pointed out what he had experienced as an apostle. He was telling them to follow his example of suffering for the gospel and for Jesus Christ. It was Paul's example we should emulate not the man himself. No servant of God wants followers for the sake of having followers. Paul urged them to follow him in the sense of following his teaching, his example, and his lifestyle of denying self, taking up the cross, and being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

There are many people who teach the Bible. Many bible instructors. However, Paul considered himself their father in the faith. He was not just a Bible teacher. He was ready to lay down his life for their sake and had already laid down his life for them and other churches. This is the difference between an instructor and a father. A spiritual father is ready to lay down his life for those God brings into his life to serve.

Speaking of fathers Paul now mentioned his son in the faith Timothy whom he was sending to them. Paul wanted Timothy to go to the Corinthians and remind them of what Paul taught them. This demonstrated how important it is we continue to repeat the message of the gospel over and over. People need to hear it until it sinks into them and becomes the framework for their thinking. We need to teach the gospel until it grabs hold on the spirit, mind, and soul and does the work of bringing eternal life. God's word does not return void. It will accomplish the purpose God sent it. We need to be faithful to proclaim God's word. The most important message in the Bible is that Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

Notice Paul only had one message. He said he preached the same message in every church he went to. This was the focus and steadfastness which we need to aspire to. We need to have our spirit and mind saturated with the gospel. We need to learn how the gospel applies to the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from self, sin, and the power of the gospel over the world system and the devil. We need to learn who we are in Christ Jesus. We need to know that God himself placed us in Christ. This is God's work from first to last. We need to stand securely and abide always on the sacred ground of the completed and finished work of Christ.

Paul had serious opposition in the Corinthian church. He said he would go to the Corinthian church and find out who could walk their talk. There were people talking but God's kingdom is not about talk but about God's power. It is interesting that Paul gave them the choice of how he related to them. I get the feeling that Paul did not want to be harsh but was willing to do whatever he needed to in order to

secure them in the gospel. He was ready to confront if that was what it took even though he didn't really want to resort to that.

Be ready to endure whatever we have to. Most people will not hear the gospel or believe the gospel. Most people will look down their nose at the Bible believing gospel preaching Christian. Be prepared to endure that attitude from unbelievers and fake Christians. Be willing to accept the cost and pay the price of following Jesus all the way.

Sin In The Church - Chapter 5

5:1

Fornication was reported in the Corinthian church. The news of sin in the church was well known by other churches and by the general public.

Churches generate a reputation in their community for good or bad. What made matters worse was that the sin in the Corinthian church was of a nature not common among unbelievers. They had sin in the church and it was heinous to unbelievers. How could they hope to be a witness for God with this in the middle of the church? They could not and so Paul had to confront them.

Churches can be weak when confronting sin among members. It is hard for men to confront sin in other's lives. It is a necessary job especially for those whose full time job is to watch over the church.

There are pastors incapable of performing this duty. Obviously overseers at the Corinthian church were unable to deal with the problem. They were puffed up about this? What does this mean? They were proud of this? I don't think they were proud of the sin. I think they were proud of how loving and gracious they were by tolerating it. This is a subtle deception of the devil. Men justify being lazy and cowards by boasting about how merciful and tolerant they are.

In this situation tolerance was not the answer. Tolerance is not always the correct response. Is tolerance the answer when a wolf is eating sheep? Is tolerance the answer when a bear is carrying off children? Is tolerance the answer when a lion is in the street killing people? To allow sin in the church is to let loose the wolf, the bear, and the lion. I know King David would not stand for it. He took the bear by the beard and killed him.

There is a season and time for everything. It takes wisdom from God to know when to apply mercy and tolerance. It takes wisdom from God to know when to stand up and resist evil doers. Tolerance at the wrong time in the wrong context is deadly.

In the Corinthian church tolerance of this man's sin was deadly. Paul would not stand by and let it go. He hit the problem head on by putting his finger on the sin and condemning it right away. He scolded them soundly with this letter.

Every problem has its own solution and there are different tools to fix what is broken. Be sure you know how to use all the tools in God's word to deal with any situation which may arise in your life and also in the lives of those you care about.

5:2-5

Paul was with them in his heart. His letter was an extension of himself. His heart was with them, and whether he was there with them or not his authority among them still applied. Here we are 2,000 years later and Paul is still with us, too.

Delivering someone to Satan meant the man committing the sin would no longer be allowed to enjoy the provision and protection of church. This was serious business. Communities were built around the synagogue and early Christians needed the Christian community in a practical way. Being put outside the fellowship of a church was like what it feels like today to get fired from a job. It had a big impact.

Churches are still supposed to deal with these situations. However, it probably has less impact on the individual today other than bruising the pride of the offender. Most people today would just go down the street to another church and continue like nothing happened.

To be outside the protection of the church is indeed to be prey to the enemy. We need brothers and sisters in Christ to watch our blind spots. We need interaction, correction, and encouragement. Without this interaction with other Christians we become more vulnerable to deception.

The destruction of the flesh did not mean the destruction of the physical body but rather the destruction of the "flesh" in a spiritual sense. Paul used the word "flesh" to describe the selfish attitude of men. It is the attitude of self-worship and self-love which characterized unbelievers. This is what Paul wanted to see destroyed in this man's life. This man needed to open his eyes and realize his sin was not only affecting him but also people around him. Sin always makes us focus on ourselves. When we repent we begin to think about others instead of our own self.

Notice this process was not intended to bring permanent damage to the man. Even if he was no longer able to benefit from the community directly no doubt the Corinthians would still keep up with him. This man did not lose salvation. It was Paul's goal to make sure he would place his focus back on his relationship with God and work out his salvation with fear and trembling.

I don't think many churches get this right. It is easy to go to one extreme or the other in dealing with people. Some people, like the Corinthians, decided to tolerate the sin. Others are zealous in the other direction and set up elaborate traps for people to get thrown out of ministry. All these extremes are unbiblical.

Remember this process takes wisdom from God. There are no hard rules in dealing with people. We need to make sure we stay humble and constantly examine our motives in what we are doing to people.

5:6-8

Evidently the Corinthians boasted about how tolerant they were to the man who was in open sin. Paul rebuked them. He said their "glorying" was not good. This boasting was not a good thing. Have you ever heard someone boast of how tolerant they are of people who are in open sin?

Paul used the analogy of leaven and bread to make his point that even a little bit of sin in the church can change everyone in the church. I've seen this before at churches I attended when I was a young

Christian. I saw how individuals could wield influence even though on the surface it was not seen but years later the rotten fruit was exposed.

This principle of one person affecting an entire group is demonstrated by example in the Old Testament. The account in Joshua of Achan's sin and its consequences teach us this principle. When we commit sin we do not just hurt ourselves. We affect everyone around us.

The consequences of sin is always death. People die in different ways and not only physically. Relationships die. Opportunities are missed. Friendships sour. Blessings God planned for us can be forfeited by not dealing with sin in our lives.

This is important when it comes to protecting the church. The church cannot function if there is sin in the camp. If there are people in the church who live in open sin it has an affect on the congregation. Sin must be dealt with.

The Corinthians deceived themselves that they were good Christians by tolerating this open sin in the church. Paul told them they were wrong. It is never the right thing to tolerate open sin in the church. It must be dealt with. If it is not removed it will leaven the congregation.

5:9-13

We should not associate with people who claim to be a Christian but who live in open and unrepentant sin. Why is this? One reason is because of the damage done to the reputation of the church. Not only that but there is real spiritual damage to people in the church who tolerate someone who claims to be a Christian but lives like this.

Paul expanded the list of sins to watch out for to include not only fornication but also covetousness, idolatry, railing, alcoholism, and extortion. Some of these are hard to pin down for people today who do not know what the Bible teaches.

The rule of thumb is to avoid people who claim to be Christians but do not live according to their profession. Jesus said we can know false prophets by their bad fruit. Paul encouraged Christians to use discernment and judge people by their actions. This was not hypocritical judgment like what Jesus rebuked people for. Christians are called to exercise righteous judgment especially when it comes to protecting the church.

I like how Paul pointed out the obvious that he did not mean to exclude unbelievers because then you would have to leave the world. Unbelievers are not as much danger to the church. It is people who claim to be Christians but live like unbelievers which are a real danger. Jesus called these people "hypocrites". He rebuked the religious leaders. They claimed to know God but by their works they denied him.

Another reason this is serious is because it stops people from getting saved. The church is the instrument God uses to preach the gospel. People are smart enough to know that if people who claim to be Christians live like them or worse then what they preach has no value. This is why I suspect Paul rebuked the fortune teller woman who followed them. He did not want people to confuse the gospel with fortune tellers and give Christians that kind of reputation.

Just because a person claims to be a Christian does not make him one. Paul said we should put out of the church any wicked person especially if they claim to be a Christian.

Inheritance - Chapter 6

6:1-8

The Corinthian Christians fought with one another to the point of going to secular courts. They allowed unbelieving judges to make decisions for them.

Paul's last point seems like the strongest point he made on this issue. *"Why do ye not rather take wrong?"* This question points back to the words of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus taught us to turn the other cheek. Jesus taught us that if someone took our coat then give them our shirt as well. For the sake of the gospel we are willing to lose whatever material goods we have. If someone takes advantage of us then the correct response is what Jesus taught. As Christians we want to have a biblical attitude, right? Sadly, many don't care about responding biblically to situations like this. Like the Corinthians they want their stuff. They want revenge. They want justice even if it means getting unbelievers involved to settle a dispute between "brothers".

Paul went through a series of logical suggestions to them which would be more preferable than secular courts. We have some holy sarcasm from Paul when he asked them if there was not someone "wise" enough in their church to settle disputes.

While Paul was dealing with the issue at hand he also mentioned other extraordinary information which surprised me. I don't know if this little bit of information is anywhere else in the Bible. Christians will judge angels? Christians will judge the world?

We have little idea of what will happen in the future for Christians. I wonder how many Christians even know this information about the future? I've read the Bible many times and this information barely registered in my mind until right now. It is incredible what God has planned for us in the future. We really cannot comprehend the good plan which the Lord has in store for us. Let's be glad for all that God has planned for us.

6:9-11

How are the righteous and unrighteous separated? How can you tell the righteous from the wicked? Paul gave us a short list of those who will not inherit the kingdom of God. The point was simple. People who live like the devil will not inherit God's kingdom.

This list included fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. I get the feeling this list is not exhaustive but is only a sample to help us understand that there are clear indications which can be easily identified that mark someone as not inheriting God's kingdom. Live like one of those in this list and you can forget about God's kingdom.

Why did Paul tell them not to be deceived? Because they were on the road to deception by accepting a man's sin in their church. They patted themselves on the back at being merciful. They did not understand that this man's sin was a cancer in the church. It was a disease. People who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. By allowing them to continue in sin we don't do them any favors. By not confronting sin we hurt people.

The most selfish and unloving thing we can do is avoid rebuking brothers in Christ who are in open sin. It is our duty to reprove, rebuke, and exhort our brothers with all long suffering and doctrine.

Don't be deceived into thinking one is spiritual when tolerating the sins of others. If they call themselves a Christian there is only one standard for living. Read 1 Peter 1:15-16. Don't be deceived by people who tolerate compromise in the lives of other people. If they tolerate sin it is because they also are living in compromise and unconfessed sin. Don't be deceived by wolves in sheep's clothing.

6:12

If we look at this verse in context with the previous verses and what follows I see this verse pertaining to man's knowledge of good and evil. Men exercise rights to take others to court and exact justice against people. This is the wisdom of the world. It is how people in the world operate. Paul said that a Christian does not live according to the knowledge of good and evil. Everything is lawful for the Christian but not everything is good for us.

He said to the Corinthians that they were free to exercise legal rights in a court of law. They were free to live in any way they pleased. Christ set us free. However, are we then to use this freedom in Christ to live like people in the world system?

All things are lawful for me, he says. But not everything is good for me. If I start living according to this attitude in the world of good and evil then I will be ensnared by this thinking. It is much better to live according to the Holy Spirit and suffer injustice against one's own self. It is much better for the Christian to fly over the tree of the knowledge of good and evil upon the wings of the Spirit of God. If we deny self and surrender our righteousness then God will enable us to live a completely different life than those who are trapped in the world system.

Those who demand their rights and justify themselves live according to the principles of the world system which originate in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Many people are deceived into thinking the world is divided into good and evil but it is not. Satan is not an equal with God. He is a created being. There is no contest between good and evil. The Lord is good and he will destroy what is evil when he completes his plan in allowing it.

There is no real contest of good versus evil. There is only the Lord. He is a real person. A Christian is not a man who tries to do good. He is not trying to quit sin. He does not sin because he is living in the power of the Spirit. He does what is right because he is living in the power of the Spirit. It is not a moral question between right and wrong. He is living by the life of God. This far exceeds and surpasses men's ideas of what is lawful. All things are lawful. But I will live according to the Spirit.

We will not be brought under the power of this world system and its ideas of right and wrong. We live under the Lord Jesus Christ which far surpasses any law this world can come up with.

6:13-20

A false doctrine was that what a man did with his body did not matter as a Christian. The Lord is involved with us on every level. Serving the Lord is not merely a spiritual experience but is affected by what we do with the body. Paul tied this in with the issue of sexual immorality. Paul's taught that fornication directly impacts our relationship with the Lord.

Paul's exhortation was to "flee fornication". This sin is deadly to Christians. We need to be careful to live a pure and holy life. In today's world this is difficult as we are bombarded by sexual immorality through media. It takes a concentrated effort to avoid what will cause us to be snared by sexual immorality. It is our duty to live a clean and pure life. The Lord will help us to live a clean life. We can pray and ask for his help. We can pray and ask for the spiritual strength and resolve to live in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

Sexual immorality is devastating to the Christian's walk with the Lord. It provides the enemy with much opportunity to destroy our faith and to bring condemnation upon us.

The body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy spirit lives inside of us. We need to respect the presence of the Holy Spirit in our life and not disrespect our temple. We have a duty to present our bodies to the Lord as living sacrifices.

We have been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ. We are no longer our own. We should glorify God in our body and in our spirit.

Marriage And Ministry - Chapter 7

7:1-2

One of the practical ways Paul taught the church to remove sexual immorality was for people to get married. He taught them that in order to avoid fornication a man should have a wife and every woman have her own husband. From this we see God's plan for the sexual relationship is within marriage. God's plan is for a man and a woman to be married. Our culture today perverts what God taught in the Bible.

Christians should follow what the Bible teaches. When I hear so-called "Christians" following the ideas of culture on marriage it makes me cringe. I understand why unbelievers or non-Christians are deceived by propaganda but Christians should know better.

We need to return to the word of God on issues like marriage. The Lord created a man and a woman and joined them together in marriage. This is the pattern in the Bible. We do not see any other pattern in scripture for marriage.

7:3-9

Don't misunderstand Paul as teaching the main purpose in marriage is merely to avoid fornication. He is focusing, instead, upon problems this church experienced. He taught them that sexual relations within marriage was the answer to problems they had.

In marriage the spouse should be sensitive to the needs of the other. The only reason married people abstain from sexual relations is for time to fast and pray. However, this should not go on continuously because it will give the enemy an opportunity to tempt people.

Paul revealed something about himself. He said he had a gift of remaining single with no necessity for sexual relations. This was a spiritual gift given to Paul by the Lord so that Paul could fulfill his ministry. Not everyone in the church has the same gift or calling. Each person has a different ministry and a different gift in the church. The majority of people will get married.

Some think the word "burn" refers to hell but I think it refers to sexual passion. It is better for people to get married rather than burn with passion. These verses show how practical the word of God is in providing instructions for living the Christian life. The Lord does not leave anything out in teaching us how to live.

7:10-11

Paul emphasized this command to stay married was not only from him but was from the Lord Jesus. If we read the gospel accounts we know Jesus taught us that spouses should not divorce. Divorce is the result of hardhearted people. What God joined together let no man put asunder.

When a couple is married it is for life. Now, Paul also taught if a woman separated from her husband that she should not get remarried but look for a possibility of being reconciled. Why would he speak this to the wife? I think it was to take into account verbal or physical abuse against the wife from the husband. There was an allowance made for a wife to separate from her husband, and I believe those situations are when a wife's life is in danger. Or when she is verbally or physically abused.

God hates divorce. Divorce is almost always a result of selfish people who will not compromise and learn to live with another person. Divorce is devastating, whether or not people realize it, and it also wounds people around them. There really is no healing from divorce except God's grace. The suffering from divorce lingers for a lifetime. I have seen this in my family when my parents were divorced. The scars last a lifetime.

God hates divorce. It is the complete opposite of his plan for mankind. It destroys God's image in people. It robs people of life. It twists the mind and makes a person emotionally unstable and rips away at whatever spiritual life a person has. God hates it because divorce brings death.

7:12-16

Paul addressed another question from the Corinthians. The question was whether a Christian should stay married to an unbelieving spouse. Should they separate or divorce from an unbeliever. We know the Lord hates divorce. I'm thinking this question was more in the category of separating from someone. Paul said if the unbelieving spouse wanted to continue living with the Christian then the Christian should not leave them. However, if the unbelieving spouse did leave we should let them go their way. Paul said the Christian is called to peace.

This situation might arise when two people who were not Christian got married and then later one became a Christian. It would be difficult to maintain this relationship. Christians and unbelievers have two different goals in life. They walk down two different and opposite roads.

As Christians we should not walk away from people. Instead, we continue to serve the Lord and people around us choose the Lord or go their way. I've seen this happen in my life. If you serve the Lord with all your heart people will separate from you. Read Luke 6:22-23.

7:17-24

You can live for God where you are. Paul taught that no matter where we are we can live for the Lord Jesus. God called us where we are. We don't have to go to Bible college to serve the Lord Jesus. Some may think in-depth Bible education is needed before they can serve the Lord. The truth is that a brand new Christian with little knowledge of the Bible can serve the Lord.

He said Jews did not need to become Gentiles to be Christians. Gentiles did not need to become Jews to be a Christian. There were slaves who became Christians. Paul told them if they got an opportunity to be free take it. However, they should not let their status as a slave prevent them from serving God where they were. No matter where we are we can serve God. The lowliest employee to the highest executive can serve the Lord where they are.

We see examples in the Bible. Nehemiah was the king's cup bearer and he was faithful in his job. As opportunity came he went to Jerusalem. He helped establish Israel back in Jerusalem. Also, Daniel was a prisoner of war but served God faithfully. He was promoted to a high position in the Babylonian and Persian empires. Joseph was sold into slavery but served God faithfully in every situation. One day he became the prince of Egypt.

We need to learn to be faithful where we are. We need to learn to serve God in our daily life where God called us. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking there is greener grass somewhere. It is my firm conviction God looks for men who will be faithful where they are. We should live as we are called.

7:25-28

During the time of distress when Paul wrote this letter he advised people who were not married to not seek a wife. This seemed to contradict what he said earlier that people should get married rather than burn. However, this is a different context. Always be careful of what context you are in. Paul said because they lived in a time of "distress" that life would be much harder for Christians who were married. Perhaps it was a time of persecution. Perhaps families were in danger of being torn apart by persecution. In that kind of situation it was easier to endure if a man was single and unattached. There would be less suffering. He said those who married would face "trouble in the flesh" and I can only assume he meant because of the persecution of Christians.

This was an example of the Bible speaking specifically to a particular time. We can also learn a biblical principle here. The principle is that there is a time and season for everything. There will be times in church history when there will be persecution. During those times men and women who marry face a harder time. Paul admonished us that if we are married we should not seek to be loosed from our spouse even during difficult times. Marriage is sacred.

7:29-31

Paul repeated what the apostle John taught in First John. The world is passing away. What does this mean? We currently live in a world system that is temporary. It will not last. I'm not talking about tall buildings or city infrastructure. I'm talking about the principles on which men build civilization is passing away. Fallen men in union with the serpent create a civilization which attempts to be separate and independent from God. It is based on self-worship rather than on the worship of the one true God.

Paul taught us to remember this present world order is passing away. Christians should not make the goal of their life this temporary world system. The goal of the unbeliever is self-provision, self-protection, and self-worship. This is the opposite of the born again Christian. For the born again Spirit filled Christian his life goal is Jesus. The Lord is our provision, he is our protector, and he is our prize. We worship the Lord Jesus Christ. We belong to him. We are one with him.

Those who live in unbelief and do not abide in God are living for what is temporary and passing away. Paul taught us not to hold on to the world. Remember Lot's wife. She loved what she had in the world system of Sodom and Gomorrah and looked back with longing to what God had judged to be destroyed. God has judged this world and it will pass away. We should not long for the things of this world and we should not make the goal of our life this present world. Our goal is eternity. Our hope is rooted in what is eternal. We can let go of the temporary because we are investing in what is eternal and will last forever. Read 1 John 2:15-17.

7:32-40

I see where religions based on Christianity get the idea that men in ministry should not be married. However, I do not think Paul was putting down marriage. A man who is not married is not necessarily more dedicated to the Lord or more spiritual. A man who is married is not necessarily less spiritual or less dedicated. The point Paul made was a practical observation. Married men have a responsibility to take care of their wives and will devote energy toward that. There is no sin in this. The same is true for wives. Husbands and wives spend their life taking care of one another. This does not make them less committed to the Lord or less spiritual.

It does mean their attention is divided. They simply have less time in the day to devote to the Lord's work. A single person has the advantage of being able to serve the Lord with all their time. They have freedom to do things married people cannot do.

I did not understand this when I was a young Christian. Before I was married I read these scriptures and thought I would be less of a Christian if I got married. Eventually the Lord did bless me with a wonderful wife. Over time I discovered I grew much closer to the Lord as a married man than I would ever have as a single man.

After I was married I never went back to serving God in full time ministry for very long. Many times my wife and I tried to serve the Lord at various ministries full time but it did not work. We needed finances or medical insurance which we just could not get at ministries. I discovered what Paul said in these verses was true.

Did that make me less spiritual or less of a Christian? No, it was just a simple fact of life. We cannot do everything. We have to make decisions in life on how we will serve God. There is nothing wrong with serving God as a single man or serving God as a married man. However, one cannot do both. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. We need to continue in the calling the Lord gave us.

Offending Others - Chapter 8

8:1

This chapter is about eating food offered to idols. This was a problem in Paul's day. Paul's teaching was that Christians should not allow it to bother their conscience if they eat meat offered to idols. It is just meat. Paul said some Christians who had a past history of eating meat offered to idols would be offended by this. They were not strong enough in their faith in the gospel. To observe another Christian eating meat offered to idols would stumble them. It would tempt them to go back to idol worship. Paul taught that even if someone had knowledge that eating meat was OK they should abstain if there was a brother who would be offended. The rule of thumb for Christians is always love.

The question is what do we live by? Do we live by our knowledge of right and wrong or do we live by love. This is the difference between Christians who are carnal and those who live by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads the Christian to do what is best for others. He will lead us to deny ourselves. We may want to eat meat because we know it doesn't matter if it was offered to an idol. But will we endanger another Christian by doing this? Will another Christian be tempted to go back to idol worship?

This is also covered by Paul in Romans chapter 14 and 15. A spiritual Christian lives according to love. This love prevents him from doing anything which offends other Christians. Preach grace and preach freedom but don't stumble those who are weak. Don't offend those who are still entangled by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

8:2-3

Paul said "knowledge puffeth up". The knowledge he talks about is the freedom Christians have to eat meat. We are free to eat meat even if it was offered to idols. We are not adversely affected spiritually by eating meat. Christians do not live under Old Testament rules concerning clean and unclean food. We should not be bothered by food that was used in a religious ceremony.

Paul warned this knowledge of our freedom can lead to pride. If we insist on our freedoms we can hurt people. This is a subtle distinction Paul made. It is true we are free but we are not free to hurt the faith of others. We are not free to offend people.

The result of knowledge is pride. This principle holds true not only in the context of Christian liberty concerning food and drink. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was where man fell into sin. Unbelievers put emphasis on knowledge. Most of the world system is built on the principle of attaining levels of worldly knowledge.

What is the result of love? What is the result of putting others before one's own self? What is the result of thinking about the welfare of others and acting according to this principle?

Paul said the man who loves God is known by God. When we live according to the Holy Spirit we will love God and love people. We will deny ourselves and live to serve. We will be faithful and good servants of the Lord.

It is my goal to be known by the Lord. It is my goal to hear him say on judgment day, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

8:4-6

Paul addressed the issue of eating food sacrificed to idols. He made it clear that for Christians all food is clean. It is clean even if it was used in some pagan religious ceremony. For the Christian all foods are clean. There are no rules for what a Christian can or cannot eat. All of the dietary laws given to the nation of Israel were done away when Christ fulfilled the law in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Paul acknowledged that pagans follow things they call gods or lords. But for those who know the truth of the gospel there is only one God, the Father, and his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. He also links the Lord Jesus Christ as God by saying "Jesus Christ, by whom whom are all things". God is three in one: God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is prophet, priest, and king. He is Israel, the church, and the kingdom. He was, and is, and is to come, God three in one.

8:7-13

Christians should be sensitive to those around them and always live in such a way that the weakest man will not be offended by the way we live. Not every Christian understands their freedom from rules so those who do know their freedom should live in such a way not to offend those who are confused. Living according to the love of Christ is the new rule we live by. Sometimes this means we submit to unreasonable situations in order not to offend those who are oppressed.

At other times we might live like unbelievers because they are not offended by our lack of religious rules. Paul said he became like those without law to win those who were not under the law. He became all things to all people so he could win people to Christ. (1 Corinthians 9:22)

Remember the goal is to be an ambassador for Christ. The goal is to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. The goal is to live in such a way that unbelievers will be drawn to Christ. We live in such a way that those who are weak in faith can be stronger. In every situation we live in a way that no one will be offended. People will be offended, though. Some people look for reasons to be offended in order to justify unbelief or hatred. They find reasons to justify selfishness.

In those cases there is not much we can do. As much as it lies with us let us strive to live in peace with others. (Psalm 120:7)

Supporting Ministry - Chapter 9

9:1-14

Those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. What does it mean to live of the gospel? I think in the context Paul meant those who preach the gospel should be supported financially for their work.

The ones who support them materially should be the ones who benefit from their spiritual work. This was also repeated by Paul in Galatians 6:6.

Why did Paul address this? Because there were people in the Corinthian church who challenged Paul's credentials as an apostle. Paul did not receive material support from them and on this basis people accused him of not being legitimate. This is a worldly attitude to think a man is not legitimate because he does not receive money. Unbelievers are convinced that a man's worth is tied to making money.

Before Paul explained to them why he didn't receive financial support he agreed that men who labor in the ministry should be supported. Gospel preachers should be supported materially for the work. As we read the next verses we find out why Paul did not receive financial support from this particular church.

Paul's proof that he was an apostle rested on the fact that this church was founded through his ministry. They were the proof of his apostleship. This is better proof of ministry. The proof is in the lives that are brought into God's Kingdom. Paul said in his letter to the Thessalonians that they were his joy and crown when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. This taught me that my investment in this life on earth should be in the lives of people. I should be investing in people by sharing God's word and living a lifestyle which makes it difficult for people to discredit the gospel.

Paul used the Old Testament law of not muzzling an ox when it treads out the grain to make his point. This shows us Paul's method of using scripture in his teaching and instructing. All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for instruction and training others in right living. (2 Timothy 3:16).

Paul told them he did not receive financial support because he did not want to hinder the preaching of the gospel. He did not want people to have the idea he preached for money. This was why many times Paul worked and labored vocationally while he preached the gospel. He was sensitive to people and did not want to give people the wrong idea about his motive in ministry. Despite his care to avoid misunderstanding people still made false accusations against Paul. Sometimes it does not matter how hard we try to do what is right people will still assign false motives to our actions and words. This is why it is important we live before God and do not have a fear of man.

We cannot stop men from thinking evil of us but we need to always be concerned about what the Lord thinks about us. If we live for God we can have a clear conscience and can have great confidence in our lives that no matter what people think about us that we lived an honest life.

9:15-17

The Lord called Paul to preach the gospel. Paul said he would preach the gospel regardless of whether or not anyone supported his ministry. The Lord gave him the job and he said there was a woe on him if he did not preach the gospel. He knew if he preached with a willing heart the Lord would reward him and if he did not preach with a willing heart he still could not walk away from God's calling on his life.

Paul said it was right for the people in the church to support their preacher. It was right for Christians to support ministries that preach the gospel. However, Paul said he did not ask for support from the Corinthian church because he felt it would give them occasion to accuse him of false motives. He did everything he could to prove he was sincere.

Paul did not write this letter to ask the Corinthians for financial support. He wrote this letter to show them how much he loved them despite their false accusations and the sin in their church. He wanted them to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ loved them.

My takeaway is to be faithful to represent the gospel in life and speech. I am to live for the Lord Jesus and do everything I can to convince others by my actions and words that I am a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is no longer I that live but Christ who lives in me.

9:18-23

Paul did not want anyone to be hindered in hearing the preaching of the gospel. As a result he never asked for people to financially support him. There were people and churches who did support Paul but this was not Paul's goal in ministry. His goal was to obey the Lord Jesus, preach the gospel, and do everything possible to make it easy for anyone to hear and believe the gospel.

Paul adapted himself to whatever circumstances he was in so people could understand and believe the gospel. When he was around unbelievers or Gentiles he adapted himself to that situation. He did not put on a religious front but he was himself and preached the gospel in plain fashion. When he was with religious Jewish people he adapted himself to that situation as well. No matter who he was ministering to he adapted himself for the sake of the gospel.

Some may use these verses to justify living like unbelievers but that is not what Paul said. Paul never compromised the message of the gospel. He didn't get piercings, tattoos, or drink a beer with the guys in order to win people to Christ. Instead, he simplified his life and made sure everyone understood he was sincere and without ulterior motive in his message.

Being all things to all people does not mean Paul compromised the gospel or his life of holiness to the Lord. Jesus never sinned yet he sat down to eat with sinners so they could come to the saving knowledge of the gospel.

We can do the same in the power of the Holy Spirit. We should not be afraid to go anywhere or speak to anyone about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Make sure your heart is right and you are doing it in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

9:24-27

Paul was not talking about salvation. He was not talking about heaven or hell in these verses. If we put these verses into the context of salvation then we will come away with the idea that we have to work for salvation. We might think our salvation was dependent on our ability to bring our body under subjection.

Paul was not talking about eternal life or salvation. This does not mean what he said was not important to the Christian. There will come a day when every Christian will stand before the Lord and be rewarded for his service. There is the real possibility of losing rewards that we might have had if we had been faithful. This is a real and serious truth we need to consider and take to heart.

When Paul said he was concerned about being a castaway it was clear that a man can be in ministry, preach the gospel, and yet still lose rewards. How is this possible? It can happen if that man lives

carelessly. If he does not live a faithful, consistent, and steadfast life he can lose rewards at the judgment seat of Christ.

I have grown to have a fear of God in this respect. I can say with Paul that I do not want to be a castaway. In this sense a castaway is someone who enters heaven but does not receive the rewards which were planned for him.

We have a short time on this earth to prepare for the kingdom of God. We need to seriously consider how we are investing for eternity. Are we only living for the here and now and throwing our lives away? Or, are we serving the Lord Jesus Christ where he put us?

Let us be diligent to have a mind set upon things above. Let us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Let us invest in what will count now and for eternity. Let us live with our heart set upon the Lord Jesus Christ who is the author and the finisher of our faith.

Temptation - Chapter 10

10:1-4

Paul's doctrine of Christ was not limited to the New Testament. By revelation from the Holy Spirit Paul saw the Lord Jesus in the midst of Israel when they were in the wilderness. He said that Christ was their spiritual meat and their spiritual drink. The spiritual Rock that followed Israel and from which they drank. That Rock was Christ!

The Lord Jesus was with Israel. He is their Lord, He is their King, He is their Provider, Protector, and He is their Portion. From this we see the church existed within Israel. For those who had spiritual eyes to see what Paul was talking about here they were the church. The true believers in Israel were the church. And then Paul said in Galatians 6 that the church is the true Israel. In both instances Paul was talking about that holy remnant of believers who existed in Israel and those who exist today in the church. The church was not the outward structure constructed by men with brick and wood, but it was the people who truly believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. There was always this holy remnant from the beginning who composed the people of God. There are three parts to the people of God: Israel, church, and the kingdom during the millennium. In each of these parts God takes a remnant to comprise the overcomers. Those whom God not only called but also chose to be his holy remnant. These are the true believers the Lord has made promises to.

We want to be in that group. We want to believe the gospel every day and we want to cling to this Rock every day. We want to eat this spiritual meat and drink this spiritual water every day. He is our life. We cannot live spiritually apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Doctrine cannot do this for us. Knowing systematic theology cannot do this for us. We must know HIM! We must touch the Lord every day. If we fail in this nothing else will matter in the end. If we get out of touch with the Lord then everything we put our hand to will be wood, hay, and stubble. It will be burned away at the judgment seat of Christ. The only thing which will endure was what was produced through us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our work today is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Our work today is to abide in the word of the Lord Jesus Christ. He said if we abide in his word then we are his disciples indeed and we will know the truth and it will set us free.

Let God's word sink deep in your heart and set you free from fear, unbelief, and doubt. Let it set you free from self-worship and idolatry. Let it set you free so that you no longer count your life dear to yourself but are prepared to lay down your life for the gospel and for the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember the promise: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

10:5-12

"Many of them" means most of them. Most of the people who came out of Egypt never entered the Promised Land but died in the wilderness. It was not God's plan for them to die in the wilderness, but they died because they failed to believe God's word. He spoke to them through supernatural acts and signs and through Moses who gave them God's word. They did not believe the signs and they did not believe the word of God. They died in the wilderness.

They lusted after evil things, they were idolaters, they committed fornication, and they tempted Christ. Most of the items in this list are easily understood, but what does it mean to "tempt Christ"? God gave manna from heaven, he gave water out of a rock. He parted the Red Sea. After all that they still didn't believe in God. They asked if God could spread a table in the wilderness. This continual unbelief when God had proven himself was in essence "tempting Christ". They were asking God to punish them when they persisted in unbelief.

Unbelief is dangerous. To hear God's word and turn away brings terrible consequences in a person's life. When we turn away from the truth we automatically embrace lies. The father of all lies is the devil. Turning away from the Bible, God, and Jesus is the same as inviting Satan into a person's life. It is automatic. There is no in-between. We are on the Lord's side all the way or we are on the devil's side. Those who are on the devil's side are blind and do not comprehend that through their self-worship and self-adoration that they are in principle a devil-worshiper.

Paul said these things were written in the Bible so we could see there is a cause and effect relationship in the universe. God created us and the world around us in such a way that if we violate God's moral law and live for self then we will reap consequences for that decision. We will reap death, regret, sorrow, and mourning. We will reap loneliness, isolation, and a feeling of being cut off from people. This is the beginning of what hell will feel like through all eternity for those who live for self and ignore God.

When we think we are standing let us take heed. It is easy to slip, to back slide, and to ignore God's word. It is easy to get busy and forget to commune with the Lord Jesus. As surely as God's word is true if we ignore our relationship with the Lord Jesus we will die spiritually. We will wither up and lose our spiritual power and will have no strength to resist temptations the world throws at us.

The only hope we have to overcome temptation is to stay in God's word, walk in the Spirit, and communicate with the Lord Jesus every day.

10:13

Temptation is inevitable. It is built-in to the life of every Christian to face temptation. These temptations come from within us and from without. We must learn to overcome temptation. We must learn how to say "no" to temptation.

First principle is realize we are not alone. Temptations we face today were already faced by a multitude of others. We walk the same road many walked before us. Whatever I suffer others are suffering around the world. We learn from in 1 Peter 5:9, "*Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*" We have brothers and sisters around the world who suffer and endure and overcome the same temptations we face. Never think you are the only one or that your case is special. This will help to overcome the first problem with temptation: self-pity. Self-pity is a door to self-worship, and self-worship is giving in to the principle of sin and Satan.

These temptations are common. Following this first principle is the truth that God is faithful and will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able. A good example is the suffering and patience of Job. An entire book in the Bible was devoted to showing us how to endure temptation. Job is our example of patience in temptation. "*Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*" (James 5:11). Enduring temptation teaches us about God's compassion. When a man does not endure his temptation then his heart becomes bitter against the Lord. He will get bitter. The Lord withdraws his grace from anyone who shakes their fist at him. For the man who endures the trial and maintains humility the Lord will have compassion.

The Lord does not allow anything in our lives beyond our endurance. This is his promise. He will put nothing in our life that will damage us. We might not believe that but it is plain in this bible verse that God holds a leash on circumstances, on the devil, and he will help us keep our flesh under subjection.

When temptation comes then the Lord makes a way to escape from it. We must seize on this opportunity to escape. There are good examples in the Bible. Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife. Job humbled himself before God. Daniel purposed in his heart not to eat the king's food and found a way to maintain his integrity as a prisoner of war.

The spirit is willing but many times the flesh is weak. This is why we must continue to stay in God's word and continue in prayer. We cannot allow ourselves a day without touching the Lord Jesus in prayer and bible study. We must draw near to God and he will draw near to us. We cannot neglect so great a salvation. We must not allow ourselves to forget the gospel for a day: Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. When we stand on this sacred ground of the finished work of Christ we will find the power of the Holy Spirit enables us to say "NO" to temptation and say "YES" to Jesus every time.

We can bear the trial. We can overcome the temptation. The Lord gave his promise in his word. We must decide to stand by faith on God's word and not give in to unbelief. We must confess God's truth to our heart and to others. It is through faith we overcome this world and temptations.

10:14-22

Idolatry is poison for anyone but is especially heinous for Christians to participate in idolatry. Idolatry in modern culture is more sophisticated and subtle. Unless we understand the underlying principles of why people participate in idolatry we will be hard pressed to flee from it in our modern world.

At the heart of idolatry is self-worship. People light candles and incense and pray to statues because they desire provision, protection, or intervention. People are taught even the most satanic forms of idolatry and that is trusting self, worshiping self, and loving self. Self equals sin and sin equals Satan. These are all the same in spiritual principle. When we love self we are devil-worshippers. This is why Jesus told his followers that unless a man denies himself he cannot be a disciple of the Lord Jesus. Only someone who is dead to self can truly worship God. We cannot die to self, however, unless we are united together with the Lord Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection. God the Father does this for us when we put our faith in the gospel. When we believe in the Lord Jesus and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ then God the Father places us into his Son. When we are united together with the Lord Jesus we are delivered from self, sin, the world, and the devil.

So why would Paul warn these Christians to flee idolatry? That is simple. People are ignorant and full of pride. I've seen Christians, myself included, not only fail to resist temptation but actually run right into the arms of temptation. Our hearts are filled with folly but the Lord's rod of correction will drive it out of us. He will allow us to make mistakes, failures, and wallow in this miry pit until we get sick and tired of it. We will never be happy in sin as a Christian. We will be miserable. There is no pleasure in sin for the Spirit filled Christian. Eventually we remember it is much better in our Father's house even if we can just be a doorkeeper in his house.

We cannot live in agreement with the devil and stay in agreement with the Lord. One or the other must go. If we have known the Lord I believe we will always eventually choose to let go of idolatry. We will turn our heart back to the Lord. We may go astray but the good shepherd will seek us out. He will not allow one sheep to go astray. He will seek us and find us. He is the good shepherd of our souls. Thank the Lord Jesus for his faithfulness.

Don't think you can walk in agreement with idolatry and get away with it. We are not stronger than the Lord. No matter how strong we think we are or how proud we will always suffer if we disobey the Lord. If we agree with God's enemies we will suffer. It doesn't mean God stops loving us. The Lord will never stop loving us. But he will discipline us, that is for sure, and we will wish we had just listened and obeyed him. It is much better to humble our heart, listen to God, and obey what he says to us.

10:23-24

Perhaps one reason people avoid becoming a Christian is that they think they will be forced to follow rules which will make their life unhappy. This could not be further from the truth. A true Christian is set free from rules, laws, and moral codes. A Christian does not follow a list of rules. Instead, a Christian is someone who has a relationship with Jesus Christ.

All things are lawful for the Christian. A Christian is not under religious laws. However, this does not mean a Christian will want live in such a way to hurt himself or anyone else.

We should live according to the principle of love. This means we do not live for self. We live for God. Living for God means loving him and loving others more than we love ourselves.

Natural, unbelieving man loves self first. A Christian knows he no longer lives for himself but for Jesus. Our life is now bound to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am glad for this. There is no one I would rather be bound to than the Lord Jesus Christ.

All things may be lawful but all things are not good. We are free to live using wisdom God gives to us. With that comes the responsibility of living a good life. Our goal is to hear the Lord say on that day, "Well done good and faithful servant".

10:25-31

Paul addressed concerns about eating certain kinds of foods and also foods which were used in pagan religious ceremonies.

The New Testament makes it clear that Christians are under no obligation to follow Jewish dietary laws. Not only that but we shouldn't be concerned about where our food has been or what it was used for. We are free to eat food and not worry about it. We pray, give thanks, and then eat. However, the exception to this is when other people might be offended.

Our rule of thumb is to do everything for the glory of God. In eating and drinking we must ask ourselves: "Does this glorify God?" If we are hurting people then we are not glorifying God. Our goal is to please God and also to live at peace with our brother.

10:32-33

Paul's conclusion was that we live to please all men, including Jews, Gentiles, and the church. His goal was not to profit himself but to profit other people so they could be saved.

Here we have three groups of people who are all still with us to this day. We have the Jews, we have Gentiles, and we have the church.

The Lord used Israel to record the written word of God. God has used Gentiles as nation builders. The Lord used the church as ambassadors and intercessors. Each one has a part in God's plan.

The church is made of Jews and Gentiles who believe in the Lord Jesus as Messiah. We believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day. The Lord Jesus will return to establish his Kingdom on this earth. This will fulfill God's promises to Israel as far as an earthly kingdom for Israel. Jerusalem will be the center of this new world order.

We have always had Gentiles or the nations. However, during the coming Kingdom Age I see the Lord takes another remnant from the nations. This group will be those who flee to Jerusalem at the end of the thousand years when Satan is released. Satan leads the majority of the nations in one last battle against Jerusalem.

So we have Israel, the church, and the nations. These are three days, or three periods of time, in which God reveals himself to the world. He reveals himself through Israel, the church, and through the nations. This also corresponds with the roles of prophet, priest, and king.

God is three in one. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is prophet, priest, and king. He reveals himself through Israel, the church, and the nations.

Look at the Ark of the Covenant. Within the tabernacle we see the Tablets of the Law, Aaron's rod that budded, and the golden pot of hidden manna. Here we have the symbols that represent Israel, the church, and the kingdom. God is three in one.

Followers Of Jesus Christ - Chapter 11

11:1

Was Paul trying to get people to follow him? Or was he telling people to imitate how he followed Christ? There is a subtle distinction in how people read this verse. Some people read this verse and think Paul was recruiting people to follow him personally because he was a spiritual giant and could be trusted with their spiritual walk. Or was he teaching people to put into practice the gospel which he taught them? Was he trying to get people to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in the same way he followed the Lord Jesus Christ? Did Paul say we should follow his example of how he followed Christ? Or was Paul trying to get a personal following of Christians who would come underneath him and look to him as their leader? I think we can dismiss the interpretation that Paul tried to get people to follow him personally on the basis of earlier chapters in this letter.

Paul preached against men building personal followings. He warned Christians not to follow the names of men but instead follow Christ. Paul told them he would not build a name for himself. He was not trying to build a following by baptizing people in his own name. Instead, Paul was called to preach the gospel, and the gospel is about teaching men individually to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

I've personally known a ministry leader who took this scripture out of context. I was once interviewed for a job in ministry and the man asked me if I would follow him as long as he followed Christ. At the time I did not discern how dangerous this man was or how messed up his thought process was. This is the kind of thinking men have who build cults.

We should not be slaves to men. Instead, each Christian is responsible to follow the Lord Jesus Christ for himself. We are each accountable to God for our obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Men who teach this scripture in such a way as to force others to submit to them or obey them are abusing the scripture and will be held accountable for it.

11:2-16

Paul praised the Corinthians for keeping "ordinances" that he delivered to them. What were these ordinances? As we see in the following verses these ordinances were about relationships between men, women, the church, with Christ and God. This passage is difficult to follow and for that reason many people develop different interpretations. Some people say these verses teach women to wear a covering in church. Some people teach this is about men's authority over women. Then we have the discussion between women having long hair and men having short hair. In the middle of this Paul said: "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels"!

I'm not going to pretend I understand all of what Paul said here. I'll skip down to verse 16 where he said "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.".

I married into a family that was once Amish and Mennonite. These former Mennonites go straight to this verse when the subject of head coverings comes up. Basically, they take this to mean that Paul is not enforcing an ordinance for women to wear head coverings.

I agree with this. I think it is a strange tradition that women are forced to wear head coverings. However, I do not think this is an essential which would cause me to break fellowship with brothers and sisters who are Mennonite or Amish. Those who have come to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are my brothers and sisters in Christ.

11:17-19

In the first half of this chapter we read that Paul praised the Corinthians for keeping certain ordinances, but here he said he did not praise them and he listed why. He listed division, heresies, and men grabbing position for prestige.

Why do people seek position? Why do people want to make a name for themselves? Ultimately it is for the purpose of provision and protection. There is an emotional reward in the feeling of prestige and power over people. That feeling evaporates quickly when the reality of the problems those people represent come crashing down! I have certainly felt that responsibility before.

I think it is interesting that Paul stated that there must be heresies among them since there were people who were in the process of recruiting others to approve of them. This approval is for the purpose of elevating one's own self in order to gain power over others. Why would anyone seek to do this in the church? What is the purpose of exalting one's own self to a position?

The root of seeking position is provision, protection, and for the confirmation of one's own self as a leader. Each man seeks to make himself the leader of others. When he attains this there is a carnal satisfaction. It is short lived. It is temporary. This desire for position, prestige, and power is only temporary. Men cannot seem to help themselves. They are slaves to this delusion. Men must worship and if they will not worship the living God in Christ Jesus then they automatically worship self. Worshiping self is the same thing as devil worship. Worshiping self is worshiping Satan. Loving self is loving the devil and submitting to the devil's idea of how the universe should exist.

The most important thing we can do is repent of self, sin, the world, and the devil and turn our eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ. We must denounce self and worship the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only one who is worthy of all glory, and honor, and praise.

11:20-22

Paul pulled back the cover of this church and gave us a glimpse into a meeting where people did not care about each another. People were getting drunk. Other people were hungry. What was this? This is a picture of the world of unbelievers where some people go to bed hungry and others party the night away. Paul asked "Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not."

I wonder if we ever consider that the Lord knows exactly what people do in the church. Do we stop and consider that the Lord listens to us when we whisper in someone's ear. Do we think that the Lord knows exactly what we do in his house? The eyes of the Lord are upon us and his ears are open. What

are we doing? What are we saying? My hope and prayer is that the Lord will say to me one day, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"

11:23-26

Many churches have the words "In Remembrance Of Me" engraved on a communion table at the front of the building. In most communion services the Pastor will quote these words. I think it is interesting that these precious words are in the middle of Paul rebuking the Corinthian church. How is it possible that something so precious can be right in the middle of Paul rebuking Christians for their drunkenness and disarray in observance of communion?

I think this is often the case. I know it has been for me. Right in the middle of my worst moments in life the Lord Jesus shows up. This merciful Savior appears right in the middle of my worst moments when everything feels like it is spinning out of control.

When I was a young man I had moments when I thought I would lose my life. The Lord Jesus would appear out of nowhere and hold my hand. He would not let me go. He held my hand and walked with me through the chaos. He hasn't changed. I have learned to not be afraid of the darkness or chaos that comes crashing on me at times.

Why? Because Jesus is in the boat with me. He may appear to be asleep but he is not. He doesn't have to rebuke me anymore for not having faith. I keep my eyes on him because I have learned to trust in the Lord. I have learned he is my provider, protector, and portion. I will trust and not be afraid. And that is all he wants from me. He wants me to confess my faith in him.

I do this in remembrance of him today. I remember his body was broken for me. I remember his blood was spilled for me. Jesus died for my sins, he was buried in a tomb, and he rose again the third day. This is all that matters. Eternity hinges on these events. Here I stand quietly on this sacred ground of the finished and completed work of Jesus Christ my Lord.

11:27-34

Paul's rebuke was profound because it revealed why people suffer and die needlessly. People do not take the holiness of God seriously. They do not show proper respect for the things of God. Communion is a time that should be sober. Yet these Christians in Corinth were careless with the things of God. I am reminded of how a man died because he stretched out his hand to steady a cart which carried the Ark of God.

We need to show proper respect and fear of God. We need to consider how we approach the Lord. Today we can draw near to God with confidence because of what Christ did for us. We can draw near with confidence that the Lord hears our prayers. He hears our prayer of confession. When we come to God through the Lord Jesus Christ he hears us. The Lord freely forgives and washes and cleanses us from all our sins.

However, there is an attitude like the Corinthians had. There is an attitude of being careless, unthankful, and taking things for granted. This attitude reminds me of Samson. Samson was blessed by God, chosen by God, and walked in the anointing of God. But he took it for granted. He did not appreciate God's grace toward him. He did not walk worthy of his calling.

We need to be careful to humble our hearts. We need to thank the Lord. We need to take the things of God serious. Don't be careless with the Lord. Don't be careless with the things of God. Instead, let us walk with reverence toward the Lord and cultivate the fear of God in our heart. Our God is a consuming fire.

Spiritual Gifts - Chapter 12

12:1

The Corinthians knew about spiritual gifts but did not understand how spiritual gifts operated in church. They did not understand the purpose God gave spiritual gifts.

Paul instructed them on the purpose and use of spiritual gifts. He provided a list of spiritual gifts. I have no reason to think this is an exhaustive list of every spiritual gift God could give but it is what the Corinthians experienced by that time.

We don't want to be ignorant about spiritual gifts. I've attended churches which embraced the use of spiritual gifts during church services but were ignorant regarding the purpose and use of spiritual gifts. I've been in other churches where the gifts were never used during a church service but the people were taught correctly about spiritual gifts, their purpose, and their use. And I've been in churches where the gifts were never used, were not taught, and were even mocked. You can get a mixture of all these attitudes in various churches.

I think the modern church would benefit from teaching on spiritual gifts. The Lord gave the church spiritual gifts for a reason. He wants us to use spiritual gifts for the purpose he gave them.

The purpose of spiritual gifts is to build and edify the church. Spiritual gifts and the men God uses to exercise these gifts should have a heart of love for the church. It is God's desire to build the church into a holy, pure temple. We are like stones built together. We comprise a holy temple for the Lord. My prayer is that the Lord will make this temple holy and pure and without any blemish.

May the Lord help us overcome ignorance in regard to spiritual gifts. May the Lord help us understand spiritual gifts, their purpose, and how we should exercise spiritual gifts in church.

12:2-3

The early Christians understood that men can speak words through spiritual influence. When they were in bondage to idols some of them spoke by the influence of evil spirits. Now that they were Christians Paul said they spoke by the Holy Spirit. However, perhaps some of the people coming and going through this church said blasphemous things while pretending they were under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Paul taught them basic discernment. No one who is under the influence of the Holy Spirit will blaspheme the Lord Jesus Christ. When someone blasphemes the Lord Jesus Christ then they are not under the influence of the Holy Spirit but some other spirit entirely.

Also, we find a word of encouragement here that when someone confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord they are under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This is a good way to discern by what spirit someone is speaking.

It is important to listen closely to what people say. Jesus said that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Sometimes you can listen to someone preaching and what they say might sound OK. They might quote a bible verse now and then. But all of a sudden they will say something coarse, or vulgar, or they might cuss. What spirit is influencing a person like that? Certainly not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not curse and does not tell coarse jokes. That would completely contradict the written word of God.

If we pay attention to the Bible we can learn about exercising discernment when it comes to spiritual gifts. Paul gave us discernment for when someone speaks. What do they say? Do they preach the gospel? Do they proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Lord? 1 Corinthians 12:4-7.

Paul taught us there are diversities of gifts, differences of administrations, and diversities of operations. Why did he teach this?

If we look at this letter as a whole we can see the Corinthians had a problem with division. Paul was trying to bring them together and get their focus off self and onto the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amazing as it is men can divide over such things as spiritual gifts, the operation of those gifts, or the different administrations in churches. All these are historical reasons for church splits and divisions despite the fact Paul addressed these issues in the first century to this church.

How is this possible? It is possible because men do not study the Bible. They do not learn from the mistakes of these Corinthians. They do not listen to Paul's correction here.

There is a reason why the Holy Spirit gave us the Bible. He did not want the church to be divided over such things as spiritual gifts, administrations, or operations.

We are taught that behind each gift is the Holy Spirit, behind each administration the same Lord, and behind each operation the same God. The Lord God works in different people to build the church into what he wants.

The church belongs to the Lord Jesus and not to us. Why do men try to exert control over churches? It is human pride and vain glory.

The church belongs to the Lord. We should humble ourselves and learn what part the Lord wants us to do in helping the church.

12:8-11

Let's put these spiritual gifts in a list: word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, and discerning of spirits. Is this an exhaustive list? I doubt it. I think this was probably examples which the Corinthian church experienced. These were probably spiritual gifts that church

needed at that time. I'm not saying these spiritual gifts are no longer active in today's church. I think today's modern church is in desperate need of spiritual gifts.

What are these gifts? Men have written books on these gifts and there are probably a lot of opinions on what each gift means or how it is used. My thought is that people probably are used by God with these gifts and don't realize it most of the time.

For example the word of wisdom. I think people receive wisdom and do not realize it is supernatural. They just get an insight and act on it and never consider it again.

This could be said for some of the other gifts. Perhaps people do realize something is supernatural when a miracle happens. I think these gifts happen most of the time in a simple manner. As I heard a preacher say one time: "supernatural in a natural way". In other words, the Holy Spirit does not draw attention to himself.

I was saved in a Pentecostal ministry when I was a young man. I believe in the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit but I've seen a lot of churches filled with phony people doing fake stuff too. After awhile it becomes tiresome and I was hungry for God's word. I was hungry for real instruction from God's word instead of emotionalism or showmanship.

Notice Paul kept repeating "same Spirit". Why did he say this? Perhaps because Paul did not want people to think because they were used by God that they were more special than the man exhorting his brother with a word of wisdom. All the gifts are from the Holy Spirit. No gift is more special or significant than another. A man who lays healing hands on a brother is no more a spiritual giant than the lady serving casserole for potluck dinner.

We need to keep this in perspective. People get uptight when supernatural events take place. We are not required to fall down, pass out, or start shouting when the Lord moves in our midst. We can worship the Lord with grateful hearts and lift our hands in praise to Jesus. No need to perform or get hysterical.

12:12-14

Paul emphasized while listing the spiritual gifts that these gifts were given by the same Spirit. He repeated this. Perhaps he repeated this because he was underlining unity. He did not want the Corinthians to divide over who had the best gift. Now he expanded on the idea of unity in the church and pointed out that even though there are a lot of different people in the church we are one body.

This word picture of the human body is interesting. Paul taught how the human body has many parts but all parts make one body. He used this illustration to teach unity in the church. The church is the body of Jesus Christ. I think if we wrap our mind around this idea it will astonish us to see how deplorable denominations, divisions, and schisms in the church are. People accept denominations as a matter of fact and that is just how it is. I do not believe that is how God designed the church. It is that way because of sin and the hardness of the hearts of men.

One of the greatest divisions between people in Paul's day was the division between Jews and Gentiles. Another division was between those who were slaves and those who were free. Notice Paul used these groups to illustrate how different the church is from the world. The world is separated along ethnic,

religious, and social lines. But that is not true in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the body of Christ there is no division between Jews, Gentiles, slaves, or free men. If any man be in Christ he is a new creation; old things have passed and all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In the church there is one baptism. This baptism is in one Spirit and in one body. There is only one baptism, one Spirit, and one body. In the true church there is no division between people.

12:15-26

I've heard sermons on this before and almost always the message urges people toward unity. The message always seems to be trying to force people to hold hands and get along with one another. I don't think that is what Paul said here. I don't think he wished for unity in the church in these verses. No, it seems he was stating that in the body of Christ there is no schism. There is no division in the body of Christ. But wait a minute! Look around! There are divisions everywhere! But maybe, just maybe what we are looking at is not the church God is looking at?

Man looks on the outward appearance. We see the surface layer. We don't see the inward side. We don't see the heart like God sees the heart. What Paul described was something that did not have any schism. It was a body that was put together with no division in it. This was not something to aspire to. This was something that existed.

Within this outward structure of what we call the "church" there exists a spiritual body of believers which comprise the body of Jesus Christ. These people are held together by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are filled with the Holy Spirit and they have received one baptism, and they are parts of one body. The true body and the true church within the outward church is invisible to us but God sees it.

It is this invisible spiritual bride of Christ that goes up at the rapture. They will be caught up together to meet the Lord Jesus in the air. And they will live forever with the Lord Jesus.

12:27-31

When Jesus spoke to the Pharisees he quoted scripture from the Old Testament that they knew. However, when he quoted it he would apply it to what was at hand at that moment. In other words the scripture canon which ended with Malachi was currently active for Jesus. None of it had become obsolete or out of date. Even though the "book was closed" with Malachi Jesus quoted it with authority and in a present tense.

Bible teachers have lost the present tense of scripture. They think when Paul mentioned apostles that was only for the early church. No! A resounding no.

The Bible is active today. This scripture is present tense active with us today. He did not say that there were apostles in the church. Paul said in this scripture that "God hath set some in the church". This does not indicate something that was done and is now over and no longer applies to us today. No, God hath set. This is not just for the early church. This is not just for the early disciples. This is for us right now today. Jesus is here right now with us, right? Or when the canon was closed 2,000 years ago did Jesus also leave us? Is Jesus irrelevant? My thought is that theologians who teach apostles and prophets no longer exist are in the same category as the Pharisees and Saducees.

Jesus has not changed. The church has not changed. The scripture has not changed.

I think it is ironic that those who oppose spiritual gifts in the church today use this last verse in this chapter to teach that apostles, prophets, and spiritual gifts are passed away. Now we know a "more excellent way" and everything Paul said previous to this verse no longer applies to us today. Blind guides! False teachers.

Everything in scripture is for us today. Apostles, prophets, teachers, those who do miracles, those who heal people, those who help, those who govern, and those who speak in tongues. All of this is for today. It has always been this way for the true church: the body of believers who have always been and always will be forever.

Love Never Fails - Chapter 13

13:1-3

The word 'charity' in old English is similar to our current English word 'love'. The word 'love' is abused in modern culture but in this chapter we have a biblical definition of the word 'love'.

If we carefully review the point Paul made in the previous chapter we understand why he was now talking about love in this chapter. He was not talking about love because he dismissed the spiritual gifts. Instead, he talked about love because this was what brought unity to the church. Love within the boundaries of truth is what we need for unity in the church. Paul taught that behind every spiritual gift is the same Spirit. He taught that behind every part of the body there was one body. He taught that God set men in the church as gifts. Behind all the gifts and administrations and parts there was one God. This one God is our unity. He is God three in one.

Now Paul continued with his emphasis on unity by demonstrating that beyond spiritual gifts and administrations that the goal of the Christian is love. All the spiritual gifts are for the purpose of building up the body of Christ in love. If we do not understand the goal of spiritual gifts then the gifts mean nothing. If we do not understand the goal of each part of the body of Christ is love then what is the use? Without this goal of love nothing matters. The ultimate goal is for this temple of Christ to be built in love.

The spiritual gifts and administrations are not so that men can build their names. This is a worldly attitude. The goal of spiritual gifts was so we could build the church in love. Love is the goal of the Christian. Love is the mark and quality of the Christian. Years ago I read a book by Francis Schaeffer on this topic, "The Mark Of The Christian", and I recommend it.

Paul did not deny the tongues of men and angels. He said, however, that unless we understand the purpose of the gifts is love then spiritual gifts do not profit. The goal of prophecy and knowledge and faith is so we can love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. It is so we can love one another as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. This is the purpose of spiritual gifts and administrations.

This is why I feel it is grievous when men use the supernatural to build their names and collect money. It is grievous because it is the opposite of love: it is selfishness and covetousness and pride. It is like the enemy to use God's gifts for the opposite purpose for which they were designed. God's gifts are so that we can build up the church in love and in truth.

13:4-8

My question is this: has knowledge passed away? If it has then I can accept that tongues has ceased. But knowledge has not passed away. Neither has tongues. God still gives people the gift of speaking in tongues. So what did Paul teach here? What is the Holy Spirit saying?

There will come a day when tongues and knowledge and prophecies will no longer be needed. We will be in the presence of God in his kingdom and there will be no need for spiritual gifts. The work of building the church will be complete. The bride and the groom will be together. Biblical love will prevail.

What is love? The Bible describes love in these verses. Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy. Love does not have any pride. Love is courteous and respectful. Love is not interested in self. Love is not easily provoked to anger. Love does not assume evil of others. Love does not rejoice in sin, but rejoices in the truth. It bears under burdens, it believes the best of others, it hopes the best for others, and endures the burdens of others. Love never fails.

The biblical love defined in this chapter will not fail. The Lord will not fail. He will return for his bride. The bride of the Lord Jesus Christ will be raptured. We will rise and meet the Lord in the air and so we will ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

13:9-13

These concluding verses affirm my conclusion that what this chapter teaches is that when we are with God in his kingdom there will no longer be any need for spiritual gifts. Paul compared our Christian experience as being like a child. However, when we receive our resurrection body and see the Lord we will be grown up. There will no longer be a need for what we had when we were a child. Is Paul implying spiritual gifts are childish? No, of course not! However, in comparison to the glory of being in the presence of God our spiritual gifts which we have now will pale in comparison. Paul pointed to this future in God's presence when he says "...then shall I know even as also I am known".

Faith, hope, charity. Why is charity the greatest? In God's kingdom we will no longer need faith or hope. We will have what we were hoping for. We will have what we only perceive now by faith. But love will endure forever. We will always love the Lord and love one another.

Decent And In Order - Chapter 14

14:1

Why should we prophesy? We can take this word 'prophesy' and use our modern word 'preaching' here. Why would I rather preach God's word than speak in tongues?

That is an easy question to answer. The most important thing is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation of souls. There is really no question that the most important thing the church does is preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pursue love because that is the goal. We love the Lord and we love one another. The spiritual gifts are for building up the church in love. We should seek the gift of preaching because this is a gift which keeps us in God's word and in the gospel.

Desire spiritual gifts. We should pray and ask the Lord to give us the spiritual gift he wants to give so we can be effective in building the church in love. We cannot be effective in ministry in our strength or natural talent. Natural talent and ability will not profit the church. We need people who are filled with the Holy Ghost and power in the church. We need men who will preach under the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit it will shut the mouth of the religious Pharisees and make the heart of common men glad. Let us pray the Lord will send us revival. Who knows what the Lord will do if we pray, right?

14:2

Calvary Chapel teaches that speaking in tongues will not be interpreted as a message from God to the church. Instead any interpretation of someone speaking in tongues will be praise to God. It is not a message for the church but rather praise toward God.

I assume that the problem Calvary Chapel is trying to solve by interpreting this verse in that manner is that if anyone can speak in tongues in church and interpret those tongues then we have an open door for an enemy to give messages to a church. However, if tongues could only be speaking to God then the interpretation will always be praise and worship toward God. In other words, anyone who speaks in tongues is praising and worshiping God. From this perspective there would never be an interpretation of tongues as a message from God. I'm guessing that Calvary Chapel hopes this will cut the legs out from under any mischief from an evil spirit coming into a church. Evil spirits can speak in tongues and then give an interpretation as if it was a message from God to a church.

Do people in Pentecostal churches know if an interpretation of tongues is from God? Some might assume this is why Pentecostal and charismatic churches are leavened with the false prosperity gospel. Do Pentecostal Christians have discernment when supernatural things happen in their churches? People need to interpret the supernatural with the Bible. The Bible is our protection from deception in matters of the supernatural.

14:3

"Prophesying" is not necessarily the same thing as "preaching". Preaching has the idea of teaching with exhortation. Prophesying is similar but also carries the sense of proclaiming an immediate message to God's people. This may include specific information about something approaching the lives of those people.

The goal of prophesying is "edification, exhortation, and comfort". This means the prophet builds the church, encourages the church, and also comforts the church. Anyone who makes statements in the church which tears down the church, discourages the church, and brings ungodly fear in the church should not be listened to. There are people in the last days who proclaim various messages in the

church. The messages do not edify, exhort, or comfort the church. If we remember this verse it will help to know what is of God and what is from man or the devil.

If we are in a situation where God can use us to bless others it is good to keep this instruction in mind. Remember we are called to build, exhort, and comfort. All these elements need to be in ministry. Don't just rebuke people and leave them. Come alongside others, listen to them, and share the word of God with them as we have opportunity. We don't want to be found standing over anyone, but instead we want to walk alongside our brother or sister in Christ. We want to build others up, we want to encourage, and we want to comfort others in their faith.

The world is bent on tearing us down. We need to be bent on building the church and helping others to stand by faith in God's word.

14:4

The word "edifieth" means to build up. This is not building up in a negative sense. Some people may read this and think that Paul presented a contrast between bad and good. It is bad to edify self; it is good to edify church. Actually it is good to build one's own self in the faith. The Bible actually commands us to build ourselves up in the faith. Read Jude 1:20.

There is nothing wrong with speaking in tongues in your devotional life for the purpose of spiritual edification. In verse 18 Paul told the Corinthians that he spoke in tongues more than them all! Why did Paul speak in tongues? He spoke in tongues in his prayer time with the Lord for the purpose of spiritual edification. This spiritual gift enables the believer to draw near to God in a unique and special way. There is nothing wrong with speaking in tongues. Paul was not putting down the practice of speaking in tongues.

In the context of a church meeting he said the gift of prophesying was better for building the church. In the context of a church meeting the gift of prophesying is the superior gift. In the context of private devotions speaking in tongues is to edify the believer. Two different contexts. One is better in one context; the other is better in the other context.

Our goal as a growing Christian is to participate in building the church in love. One great gift for this goal is to prophesy because this will edify, exhort, and comfort our brothers and sisters in Christ.

If we hear someone taking these scriptures and minimizing speaking in tongues we know right away the person does not know how to study or teach the Bible. Paul's purpose was not to minimize speaking in tongues, but was to teach us the proper context for the use of spiritual gifts. Everything was to be done decently and in order.

14:5-13

It is important to repeat something several times and use different examples. Paul was a good teacher. The Holy Spirit teaches like this. Sometimes, because of my lack of attention, the Lord teaches me something three or four times before I realize I should be taking notes.

Paul said there was nothing wrong with speaking in tongues. He said he wanted them all to speak in tongues. However, in the context of church meetings, it is preferable to speak plainly in a way that

others can benefit through revelation, knowledge, prophesying, or doctrine. This is an interesting list because it shows us that the Lord teaches and communicates in a variety of different ways. The Lord uses a lot of methods in teaching. We see this in the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus as well.

Paul revealed something here about the Corinthians. They were zealous for spiritual gifts. Evidently their zeal lacked wisdom, which reminds me of Romans 10:2, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."

It is important to be zealous for God, but is just as important that zeal be instructed by a discerning knowledge of scripture. Paul tried to redirect their zeal toward church practice which would benefit everyone in an orderly fashion.

Zeal does not mean we have to lose control of our bodies or emotions. One of the fruits of the Spirit listed for us is "temperance". (Galatians 5:22-24). Temperance is defined as self-restraint. In other words, someone controlled by the Holy Spirit will not lose control of their body or emotions. Hysteria is not a sign of the Holy Spirit.

I'm not saying there should be a lack of emotion in God's presence. I am saying that whatever we say, do, or feel in a church meeting should not disrupt others if it is the Holy Spirit.

Remember the goal in church is to build the church in love. Being disruptive or agitating other people is not the Holy Spirit. We should seek to edify others when we are in church. Our goal is edification, exhortation, and comfort of the church.

14:14-19

Again Paul repeated the same message. There is nothing wrong with speaking in tongues. However, in church we need to proclaim God's word so people can be built up, edified, and encouraged. He said the same thing in a different way.

In these verses he included more specific information on the gift of tongues. Paul said he could pray with the spirit, he could sing with the spirit, and he could also bless with the spirit. I find that interesting. The only emphasis or practice of speaking in tongues I've seen in churches is when someone speaks in tongues and then they or someone else interprets it. What Paul described was the practice of personal, devotional praying in tongues, singing in tongues, and praising God in tongues. Not only did he pray in tongues, he prayed with his understanding as well. He sang with understanding. He blessed the Lord with his understanding.

In the church we need to communicate to God and others in such a way that people can understand and receive edification. There is no point speaking in tongues in church. The exception, as Paul pointed out, was when the person interpreted the tongues.

Paul said he wanted to teach others. He would rather say five words that could be understood in church rather than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

14:20-25

Throughout this chapter we want to keep in mind that Paul's point was that in a church meeting it was preferable to speak in plain words so people could understand, be encouraged, and be built up in their faith. There is nothing wrong with speaking in tongues in one's private devotions and also in a church setting if there is an interpreter.

Paul was focused on believers in these verses but he also discussed how a non-believer might wander into a church meeting. Paul said it would benefit the unbeliever to hear God's word preached in an understandable way so he could be convicted of his sin and confess, "God is in you of a truth!".

The point was to bring people to faith, and once they are in the faith, to feed their faith with edifying words which are plain for everyone to understand.

Paul quoted an Old Testament scripture about tongues being a sign. The reference pointed to foreign invaders who spoke in another language and came as judgment upon Israel for their sin. Paul said that in the same way "tongues" are a "sign" to the unbeliever.

My understanding of this statement is that when an unbeliever hears people speaking in tongues it is a sign of their doom. It is a glimpse of a spiritual kingdom which will become a kingdom on this earth in the not-so-distant future. The Lord Jesus will return and establish his kingdom on this earth.

I experienced something like this one time. I was visiting friends and family and there were non-believing relatives there. When my family visited everyone talked at the same time and it was difficult to hear anything above the noise. I have no idea why I did this but I started speaking in tongues quietly to myself while everyone was talking.

However, someone close by heard me, and when they looked at me there was an expression of anger on their face. I quickly stopped speaking in tongues. I almost did not realize I was speaking in tongues until I saw this person looking at me with anger. I wondered why this person was so angry. And then I read this verse about "tongues" being a sign to unbelievers.

Maybe the evil spirit which controls every unbeliever (Ephesians 2:2) heard those tongues and this unbeliever did not understand where the anger came from. I don't know. But this verse reminds me of that experience.

14:26-33

Does this sound like any church you have ever been in? What Paul is describing? Have you ever been in a church meeting where people were in a circle sharing a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation? Also, why did Paul mention two or three prophets in the church meeting? Do you know any prophets in your church at all? Probably not. I've heard some pastors I respect a lot say from the pulpit, in a joke, that their churches are "non-profit" ministries, meaning "No prophets allowed". What??

The church in America is far away from what Paul described in this chapter. We have churches who are in direct disobedience to Paul's teaching and their services are complete pandemonium and chaos with

people speaking in tongues. And then you have other churches where the only person who ever speaks is the man who gets behind a pulpit on a stage. Is he the only person in that meeting who God wants to use to share a word with brothers and sisters? We are far away from the church meetings Paul described.

We should remember that the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. If you are in a church service and people lose control of themselves then get out. These people are either ignorant or something worse and in either case it is best to get away.

My heart longs for what Paul calls "churches of the saints". Where are those churches of the saints?

14:34-40

This last verse is a good one to memorize. "Let all things be done decently and in order". Is a church meeting chaotic? Then people are ignorant of the Bible. Or, if they know this verse, are they deliberately disobeying the Bible? Do you want to be in a church where a pastor and congregation are in direct disobedience to the Bible?

The verse about women seems foreign to us today. If one took this verse in isolation then we could come to strange conclusions about Paul's teaching on church order. But this is not in isolation. It is in the context of Paul teaching us the best way to build the church and how to conduct ourselves in church. Paul said women should be quiet in church and they were not permitted to speak. He said this is also in the law. This flies right in the face of what I have seen in church and on so-called "Christian" television.

Paul went on to say it was a "shame" for women to speak in church. That is shocking. It is completely opposite of modern American churches. Not only do women talk in church but most churches are controlled and run by women. I just don't know what to say about these verses. I just read this and have to shake my head. I agree with the Bible. I just don't see how church as it exists in America could ever be brought to agree with this. What does this tell us about the church in America then?

Paul understood that he was teaching some doctrine that people would be unable to accept or apply to themselves. He said "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant". Paul warned us he gave us the commandments of the Lord.

Let all things be done decently and in order. Paul gave explicit instruction on how a church meeting should be run decently and in order. I have never seen a church yet follow the pattern outlined in this chapter.

Resurrection - Chapter 15

15:1-2

Paul said "if ye keep in memory what I preached to you". Does this mean a man has to remember the gospel to be saved? If you cannot remember the gospel then how will you believe the gospel? If you don't believe the gospel then are you saved? Can you believe the gospel in the past, then change your mind and no longer believe the gospel and now be unsaved? I do not know the answer to these

questions. But I do know Paul said "if ye keep in memory". We have to remember the gospel. We need to know what the gospel is.

It might be surprising to do a survey of people walking out of church and ask them to outline the gospel. How can people be saved if they do not know the gospel? I went to a church one time for two or three months and never heard the Pastor mention the gospel. I finally left that church.

There are churches who no longer preach the gospel. They might have a sign over their door which would indicate they knew the gospel. But you won't hear the gospel. You hear a lot of words but you won't hear what Paul said here. We need to know the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation! (Romans 1:16).

I am thankful Paul lays out the gospel for us plainly so anyone can understand this. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He was crucified. He died, and he was buried, and he rose from the dead on the third day. There were people who saw him die and saw him alive again after he was buried. There are witnesses to this. It happened. In reality. In history. This is the foundation of the Christian faith.

15:3-8

In the first two verses Paul said he received the gospel. He now shared the content of the gospel. The content of the gospel is easy to remember: Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. Paul repeated two times that this was "according to the scriptures". The gospel was foretold and prophesied in the Bible which they had. The Bible they had was the Old Testament. Where in the Old Testament do we see the gospel? The gospel is seen beginning in Genesis chapter 3:14-15. The gospel is seen in God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God's promise is seen graphically in the account of how God told Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac (Hebrews 11:17-19).

The gospel is seen in the lives of men such as Job, Noah, Daniel, and David. Their life stories pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. We have specific scriptures which describe the crucifixion and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.

The gospel is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). Paul proclaimed the gospel over and over and he also gave the practical application of the gospel. He showed us in Romans chapter 6 how the application of the gospel not only forgave our sins but also delivered us from the power of sin. We understand from Galatians 2:20 how Paul's "I am" (his self-life) was crucified with Christ. We see through these glimpses of how the believer is united with Christ in crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. We are no longer dead in sin but God raised us with Christ and seated us with him in the heavens. (Ephesians chapter 2).

Everything we need to live a victorious Christian life is contained within the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. I also believe that even the three days points to the nature and character of God. Everything in the gospel is a full revelation of God three in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

15:9-11

Here we see the humility of Paul. He did not forget who he was when Jesus saved him. He remembered he persecuted the church. In his own estimation he did not feel worthy to be an apostle. That is what the

Lord Jesus made him by grace. Paul said it was because of God's grace he became an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result of abundant grace bestowed on Paul he worked harder than the other apostles in reaching the world for Jesus. This is evident in the book of Acts. His missionary journeys spread all across the Roman empire from one end to the other. Of all the apostles we have more letters in the Bible from Paul than any other apostle. Some of the apostles we don't know much of anything except what is recorded in the gospels by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Paul was different. He was not neutral toward the Lord Jesus when he met him. Paul hated the Lord Jesus and Christians when he encountered the risen Christ on the road to Damascus.

God's grace bestowed on Paul was not in vain. It produced fruit for the kingdom of God. This is the goal of God's grace in our lives. God's grace goes beyond the forgiveness of sins. It changes us. It makes us into vessels of honor in God's hands. We are his instruments of building this spiritual temple for the Lord. We are part of the church and yet we are also called to build the church. We benefit from Christ and we also work with him to accomplish his purpose.

Paul said whether it was him or the other apostles who preached they believed the gospel. It was this gospel which was the power of God for salvation for everyone who believed. Now we continue to remember the gospel every day. We remember that Jesus shed his blood for us. We remember his body was broken for us. We remember Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

15:12-20

The problem Paul addressed was the doctrine of resurrection. Somehow people in the Corinthian church speculated whether or not the resurrection was true or not. This is similar to how people today speculate if the rapture of the church is true or not. It is idle speculation but it needs to be confronted and rebuked as Paul did here.

Paul used basic logic in his argument. If there is no resurrection then Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead on the third day. If Christ did not rise from the dead then there is no gospel message, no faith, and no salvation. Preaching is vain and so is our faith.

We glean from this passage that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the heart and foundation of our faith. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have nothing. It is essential in order for a man to be saved for him to believe that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have nothing. Everything we have hinges on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are some things people can disagree on and still be in fellowship in the church. This is not one of those things which can be disagreed on. The resurrection is essential to faith, doctrine, and church fellowship. If someone denies this then they are no longer a Christian if they ever was one. There is no salvation without the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul introduced something called "first fruits". Jesus was the first fruits of those risen from the dead. Paul used the word "sleep" to indicate that Christians do not experience death in the same way as unbelievers. Unbelievers die and die permanently. Christians do not die in a permanent sense because we were raised with Christ in eternity and will be raised in the future. There were people who came back from the dead before the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but when Jesus was raised from the dead it

was completely different. He did not come back from the dead to die again. He died one time and will never die again. He was raised with an immortal body which will never die again.

When we are resurrected we will also receive a new body like Jesus. I am looking forward to this! This is the hope of every born again Christian and it is what we look forward to.

15:21-28

Paul mentioned "by man came death". This pointed back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. When they disobeyed God and ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil then death was brought into the world. By man came death. It was by this action of disobedience that death came, not just on man but on everything.

However, in the same way death came by man it was also by another man resurrection came. Through the Lord Jesus Christ resurrection and life came to the human race and to the world. Jesus said to Mary and Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25).

In these verses we find that "in Adam all die". We are the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. We inherited death from our first parents. In Adam we die. However, in Christ we are made alive. If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17). Just as in Adam all die so also in Christ all are made alive.

Christ is the first fruits. He was the first to rise from the dead and receive a resurrection body. When the Lord Jesus returns to this earth all those who put their faith in him will also be raised and receive a resurrection body.

After this will come the end when the Lord Jesus delivers up the kingdom to his Father. The Lord Jesus will put down all rule and authority and will be the final and only authority. He will put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy which will be destroyed is death itself.

It is hard to imagine a world where there will be no death, but it is certain that this world of eternal life will one day arrive. These verses point to a time when the Lord Jesus himself will be subject to the Father so that God will be all in all. This is pointing to an event, I think, which will initiate a completely new world. A new heavens. A new earth. God will be all in all. Hallelujah. I look forward to that day.

15:29-34

Cults in America make a big deal out of "baptized for the dead". Nowhere else in the Bible is this phrase mentioned but cults make this a part of "church" practice to baptize people for relatives who are dead. It is a false practice which cults engage in. Paul was referring to pagan cults in his own day who practiced this. Paul often used examples from common culture and Greek literature in making points in his arguments.

His point was about the vain speculation of people in the church about future resurrection. Paul pointed out that if there was no resurrection then the entire gospel was based on a false premise. Of course there is a resurrection! If there is no future resurrection then Christ himself did not rise from the dead. The

Lord Jesus is the first fruits of this resurrection. He is the first one to be raised from the dead and receive an eternal resurrected body which will never die again.

Paul said if there was no resurrection then the best we can do is live for the moment. He quoted a common proverb in his day: "let us eat and drink for to morrow we die". This was a proverb quoted by men who had no hope. Paul said if there was no resurrection then we have no hope. The best we can do is live for basic human need or desire right now and then die.

This kind of talk is "evil communications". It is corrupt conversation which weakens the faith of people instead of strengthening their faith. People in the church talked like this. Paul was not writing to people outside the church. Church people speculated there was no resurrection. Paul said to indulge in this vain conversation is "evil communications" and brings corruption.

Instead, wake up to righteousness and sin not. Share with others the knowledge of God instead of vain opinions. There are people who have not even been saved yet but we sit around splitting hairs on theological topics. Paul said it is a shame they indulged in this idle talk when there are people who still have not heard the gospel.

15:35-44

I'm surprised Paul called those who questioned the resurrection "thou fool". The Psalms also said that those who do not believe in God are fools. Psalm 14:1, "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.*" People question the truth and have "conversations" and discuss topics which are already settled in the Bible if we just read the Bible and believe it. Most of what people question is already plainly stated in the Bible.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is historical fact. The future resurrection of believers is fact. Paul explained to those who asked the question "with what body are people raised" that the body we have now is not the same body we are resurrected with. It may look similar. People will be able to recognize us. But it is a spiritual body. Paul said there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.

The natural body is in the process of dying. One day it will fail and our spirit will return to God. One day our spirit and body will be reunited and made into a new creation. This new body will be like the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have descriptions of the body of Jesus after he was raised. People could see him, they could hear his voice, and they also could touch him. Thomas touched his hands and his side. He knew it was the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the same way we will have a body that can be touched, seen, and a voice that can be heard. However, Jesus also could appear and disappear. He did not need to enter a door or leave through a window. He would appear and disappear. He could be in one place and then in a completely different place.

I think we will be like this. Our resurrected body will be capable of living in a way we cannot imagine right now.

Notice Paul made a clear distinction between different kinds of animals. Fish did not evolve into birds and birds into something else. Each kind has its own flesh. They did not evolve from one to another. Evolution is a lie of the devil and unbelieving men.

15:45-50

Paul pointed back to Genesis. All scripture is given by God and is profitable for teaching. The first Adam was made a living soul. The last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, was made a quickening spirit. What is the difference between a living soul and a quickening spirit?

Adam was natural and made from the earth. The Lord Jesus Christ came from heaven. He said as much. The Lord Jesus said he was from above and the people he spoke to were from below. Men come from dirt. The Lord Jesus came from heaven.

However, God is in the process of moving men from bearing the image of Adam to bearing the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are moving from being of earth to being of heaven. Paul said to set our mind on things above and not on things below. Read Colossians 3:1-2.

The Lord Jesus is the last Adam. Flesh and blood does not inherit the kingdom of God. Our resurrected bodies will have flesh, but I don't think they will have blood. I think our new bodies will run on spiritual energy instead of blood. I am certainly looking forward to be clothed with life so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by eternal life.

15:51-58

Paul described what is commonly known in English as the "rapture". This is the catching away of believers to meet the Lord in the air as described in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

There will be a generation of believers who will never experience physical death. They will be alive when the Lord Jesus returns and will receive resurrection bodies. They will not die in their earthly, natural bodies. We shall not all sleep! This means we shall not all die and be buried in the ground. But we shall all be changed. What is this change? It is when our mortal body is transformed into our immortal body. This shall happen in a single moment and in the twinkling of the eye.

In light of these facts we are steadfast and unmovable. What we do for the Lord results in eternal rewards. Don't give up what we do for the Lord Jesus. There are many things which cause discouragement, fear, or unbelief. But we overcome these challenges and obstacles by faith in God's word. We have the sword of the Spirit in hand. The word of God is in our heart and it is on our lips. We meditate on these promises and encourage ourselves in the Lord every day.

Put one foot in front of the next. One day we will step out of these earthly bodies and into our heavenly bodies. This is our blessed hope: the return of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him.

Collection For The Poor - Chapter 16

16:1-4

This collection was not for the local church or to support ministry in a local church. This collection was for people who were suffering from a famine in Jerusalem. People were starving and this collection was to relieve the suffering of Christians in Jerusalem. Paul organized this network of churches in Galatia and Corinth to help supply a material need for Christians in Jerusalem.

16:5-9

Notice in Paul's travel plans he included "if the Lord permit". While he made plans to travel as an ambassador of Christ everything he planned was subject to the Lord's will. This truth is repeated in James 4:15. The Christian does not belong to himself. He belongs to the Lord. We are servants of the Lord. We are not in charge. All our plans are proposals and can be changed by the Lord. It is good to remember this when we are young. If we don't become accustomed to this as we get older it gets harder. Our journey is a journey of loss. Control is an illusion. None of us are in control. The Lord directs as he wills.

Paul included that he wanted to tarry in Ephesus and that a great door was open for him. He saw an opportunity to preach the gospel. People were open to the gospel. There were also enemies who opposed Paul and the gospel.

We need to look for opportunities to share the gospel. We can live an honorable life and be prepared to reply to anyone who asks us about our faith in the Lord Jesus.

16:10-11

"See that he may be with you without fear". Compare this to 2 Timothy 1:7. Paul encouraged Timothy to overcome fear. Paul thought of Timothy and his struggle with fear. He told the Christians in Corinth to consider this and encourage Timothy. We get insight into Paul's thoughts on his son Timothy. I wonder if we have the same concern for brothers and sisters in Christ?

He told the Corinthians that Timothy was a worker for the Lord. No one should despise him. Evidently Timothy was young and not much to look at but Paul stood up for him. We see how Paul interceded on behalf of his co-workers and co-laborers in the Lord. We can also get this insight into Paul's intercession in Philemon. Paul stood up for people. He vouched for people. He spoke well of his brother in Christ and made sure he was taken care of. What do we do for brothers and sisters in Christ?

Paul looked forward to the arrival of Timothy and asked the church to help Timothy. It seemed like Paul did not know exactly where Timothy was but guessed he would pass through the area where the Corinthian church was located. He expected Timothy to eventually report in.

In those days there was no location GPS. People relied on the Lord and prayed for one another and wrote letters. I long for simple days like that but I think that shipped has sailed. We won't have a simple life again until the Lord Jesus Christ returns and establishes his kingdom.

16:12

Paul "greatly desired" Apollos to go to Corinth but Apollos did not want to go. Interesting. What kind of apostolic authority did Paul have anyway? Couldn't he just order people around and tell them what to do? Evidently not. That is not the kind of authority Paul the apostle had.

What was Paul's apostolic authority then? The authority Paul had was the authority to lay down his life for the gospel. God's gifts to the church are not lords over the church. They are servants! Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. These gifts are not rulers over God's heritage. They are servants in God's house. They do what the Lord tells them to do.

We can learn from Paul's example to be gracious with co-workers. We can't force people. We can't control people. We can make suggestions but every servant answers to their Lord. Each one will give an account of himself to the Lord.

We are servants and not rulers over other servants. It is easy to forget that. I've known men who thought it was their job in a church or ministry to tell everyone else what to do. I had a ministry "leader" demand that everyone in his ministry quit drinking coffee or hand in their resignation. I did not last long in that ministry after he said that.

I enjoy reading these final words of Paul. I think people skip over this and do not think it is important. I enjoy thinking about the relationships between different people which Paul mentioned at the end of this letter. I wonder what it was like to live during those days and be a part of the early church.

16:13-18

Let's focus on Paul's instruction to stand fast in faith. This letter expected exertion on the part of the Corinthians to continue in the faith. It is not an automatic thing that just happened to them. Paul encouraged them to stand fast in the faith. This required exertion on the part of the believer.

What is the work needed for the Christian to stand fast in faith? The work is this: believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe the gospel. Do not depart from the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is easy to drift from the gospel. We need to stay in God's word. We need to stay in prayer, too. It is that simple.

16:19-24

Did Paul pronounce a curse upon anyone who did not love Jesus? I think he did. Anyone who does not believe the gospel are under God's curse. They are under the wrath of God. The Bible makes it clear that God's wrath is upon anyone who does not believe and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

All men are under the curse of death. The only hope any person has is to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the motivation for Paul to travel the known world planting churches, suffering persecution, proclaiming the gospel, and then dying a martyr's death. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only hope.

Paul concluded his letter by extending his love to all of them in Christ Jesus. We should love our brothers and sisters in Christ. If we truly love the Lord we will also love the family of God.

This concludes my comments on First Corinthians.

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